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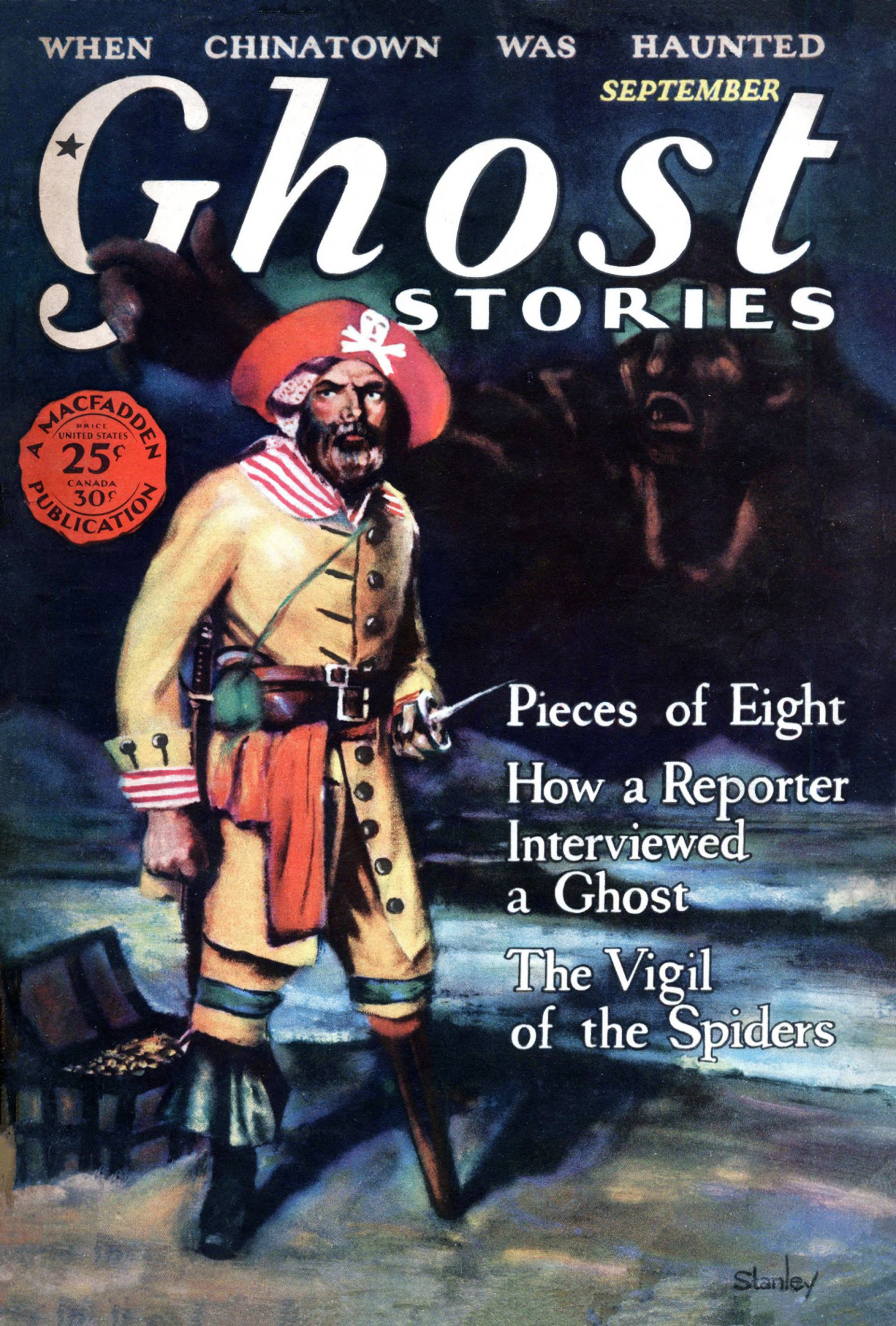

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Contents

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The Old Man who HATED Frenchmen

MEN have written boldly of high adventure by sea and land; of romance in far places known only to those whose eternal quest is the exotic in color and design. I have had my high adventure and my romance, of the kind that men have sought and found through the ages. Once upon a time, I thought that to possess a gifted pen for the telling of all these things, would be the apex of adventure.

Then, while still young enough for youth's dreams and achievements, I learned that to some it is given to adventure with the soul into strange places where the body alone cannot go. When finally I came out on the dry, safe plateau of reality, and could look back over the way my soul had led me, I knew that at last I had something to tell, if not the gifted pen for the telling.

I am a Frenchman, and I have wandered over the so-called surface of our globe, but often I have scaled the heights or climbed, with cloven hoofs, down into the bowels of the earth. South America lured and held me for a space of time, its north and south, its east and west, with as many varieties of human kind as of climate and topography.

When I was twenty-five I found myself in the ancient walled city of Cartagena. I say "found myself" advisedly, for it was no plan nor careful intent of my own that brought me there. Up to that time I had left Colombia out of my reckoning, for reasons too obvious to mention to those who are informed, and of no interest to others. Then, out of the blue, I was offered what struck me as a large salary, to act as assistant manager on a sugar estate about ten miles outside of Cartagena. It was, and still is, the most important sugar estate in the country.

The best part of the bargain was a one year contract. Had it been three or even two years, I would never have gone to Cartagena, for I was too young and restless for anything so binding as that. The world was mine for the asking—so I thought—and I accepted the offer with a gambler's spirit. I was willing to gamble, for a year, with Cartagena and its romantic and adventurous possibilities.

THE first sight of those historic walls gave me a thrill. They are four yards wide at least, and as high as such walls were built for defense in an epoch when human imagination did not compass the "Big Bertha". They are colored and patterned by time—rain and burning sun, and the eternal and often angry impact of the sea.

From that picturesque wall that circles the city, my eyes rose to the cliff that juts into the ocean, and upon the cliff, untouched through centuries, the stone convent from which, in buccaneer days, the nuns flung themselves into the sea rather than be captured by the invaders. I saw the sun shining on the bright pinks and blues and yellows of adobe dwellings inside the city wall, some of which sprawl over a landscape that rises

Along the dark road, a Will-o'-the-Wisp bobbed in terrifying fashion. What connection could this have with the strangest feud on record?

By

Paul d'Espagne

As told to

Pauline de Silva

here and there above the general flatness of the town, like a field of mustard flowers or poppies against a background of green. For I reached Cartagena soon after the end of the rainy season, and the hills that lie back of the city were green with tropical verdure. All that I have described was strange and beautiful in my eyes when they first fell upon it.

There is only one highway leading out of Cartagena, or at least there was but one in the days of which I write. From this main artery there diverged, right and left, many a narrow road or by-path, thick with dust in the dry season and rutted with several feet of mud in the rainy season. In fact, the main thoroughfare was no better in those days, except that its width offered to the wary feet of horse and mule more chance to pick their way over the spots where the torrential rains had not formed veritable pools of stagnant water.

It was over this highway that I had to ride back and forth between the sugar estate and the city. I was thankful enough that my work was in the valley and that the sugar estate was so near, comparatively, to Cartagena. Had my job been on a coffee plantation up in the hills, my trips to town would have been infrequent, for the nearest one was a half day's ride on mule-back.

OF an evening or a Sunday, I fell into the habit of seeking in Cartagena the society that the sugar estate did not offer me. I refer specifically to pretty women and their attendant diversions such as *bailes* and the bi-weekly *retretas* in the Plaza when the military band played and the girls walked slowly around and around for two hours, two or more abreast, with admiring and flirtatious swains strolling just behind them. No male was permitted to walk or sit with a girl unless her mother or other chaperon sat or walked beside her.

I was accustomed to Spanish ideas of ciceroneship and knew how to adapt myself to them or evade them. I had an eye everlastingly cocked for a pretty face—dark somnolent eyes, and small features set in an olive skin. I adored the sudden flash in somber eyes, and the swift and smiling parting of curved and very red lips. I went to all the *bailes* and *retretas*, and before I had been in Cartagena a fortnight I had more than an excellent reason for my assiduous attendance.

The reason was Magdalena Espinosa. I

met her at a *baile* the very night that the strangest adventure of my life began. She was, as it turned out, an important factor in that adventure, but not the supreme element of interest to my tale.

They were conservative in old Cartagena, and the *bailes*, formal or informal, were all grandiloquently called balls, never dances or parties. It was a particularly gala occasion the night I first met Magdalena, for a *fiesta* was in progress and this ball was the supreme event of the week.

I observed that this girl with the particularly vivacious face and graceful little body, was the cynosure of admiring male eyes and envious feminine ones. This was not merely because she was exquisitely lovely, but because her dress was a thing of subtle charm that Cartagena dressmakers and shopkeepers could not achieve. She had just returned from Bogota, and later she confided to me that she had brought back with her, Parisian concoctions that only Bogota in the north and Buenos Aires in the south ever imported from across the sea.

My disturbed senses, after a prolonged dance with Magdalena, interfered with my ordinary perceptions. She introduced me to her family but I was only vaguely aware of a mother and father and several brothers. Only one of them—Ernesto, the youngest brother—made any impression on me that night; the others I became aware of in course of time. Ernesto's hand-shake was cordial and sincere, and our liking was spontaneous and mutual. That his friendship was destined to be of value to me, I little imagined.

It is merely in passing that I mention falling in love with Magdalena at first sight, and the Paris dress had nothing to do with it. Nor had the fact (which I did not learn until later) that she came from a very old Spanish family of fame and fortune.

Magdalena—again this is but a remark in passing—was not more than seventeen at that time. Like all girls in the tropics, however, she looked and acted more mature than her tender age of ignorance and innocence—and believe me, these terms applied literally in Latin America, years ago. She was of marriageable age, and Heaven knew that there were many of Colombia's male élite eager to marry the girl.

Up to that eventful night—prophetically eventful—no man had fulfilled the requirements for a marriage with Magdalena Espinosa; to wit, he must please her family in toto, and he must more than please Magdalena. In Spanish America in the old days, the suitor of a girl of aristocratic Spanish or Portuguese descent, did not "lie on a bed of roses" in the prenuptial period.

TO my delight I was asked to call on the family in the near future. I was invited by Ernesto and the parents, for no girl of Magdalena's antecedents could conceivably ask a man to call on her, except by the lure of her eyes. I must mention here that I failed to realize that night that my name—Paul d'Espagne — although frankly French, had conveyed the impression that I was Spanish.

Shortly after midnight—the *baile* would go on until daybreak, but I had to be at work by six—I was on my sturdy and rapid-gaited mule, bound for my abode, the sugar estate. My thoughts and emotions were at highest pitch. Never before in my life of considerable adventure and inconsiderable romance, had my spirit been quite so turbulent.

The moon was in the ascendant, and not high enough to brighten the highway. Somewhere not far from the road, a few miles out of the city, was a very old cemetery. Such burial grounds exist outside of every Latin city in the world, and I had seen so many of them that this one had scarcely registered on mind or eye. Vaguely I was aware that such a one could be glimpsed from the highway, but it was the last thing to enter my thoughts in that hour of delirious mental contemplation of Magdalena's youthfully inviting and caressing eyes.

A cloud must have passed over the face of the moon, for the road was suddenly quite black, just as I rounded a bend, with Cartagena off to the right. Out of the blackness there came, from the hedgerow on the right, a bobbing, jumping ball of phosphorescent light. My mule saw it a second before I did, and very nearly unseated me in her frantic spring half across the road.

The ball of fire—I cannot adequately describe what it looked like, nor how it moved —careened, in semi-circular movements, across the broad highway, in and out between the hoofs of the terrified animal, and disappeared into the hedge on the opposite side. This happened to be the side of the road back of which lay the cemetery.

Instinct alone, developed by years in the saddle, kept me on the mule's back, with my hand controlling the bridle. My con-

scious mind was wholly occupied with the antics of the "Will-o'-the-Wisp"—which was what my reason told me it must be. From childhood I had been familiar with the appellation, usually applied metaphorically, but never had I seen this natural phenomenon, although I knew that it was occasionally encountered in the tropics at night. Also I knew that the superstitious natives believe the Will-o'-the-Wisp to have other than an earthly and explainable origin.

My eyes followed the thing until it was lost to sight in the hedgerow foliage; then I turned my attention to the poor creature under me. She was still trembling violently, although she no longer pulled on the bit in her maddened impulse to run away. I quieted her finally and went my way, and by morning I had almost forgotten the occurrence.

THE following *retreta* evening, I had some letters to get off by the steamer next day, and I did not go to town. The edge of my desire to see Magdalena was very sharp by the time I called at her home a few days later. I had seen Ernesto that afternoon and arranged, with due formality, to call on the family the same evening.

Magdalena's parents, all her brothers, and an assortment of relatives in the form of maiden aunts or widows, were present in the huge *sala* to the front of the house. I knew only too well the Spanish and Colonial custom of indigent relations living in the same home with a more affluent member of the family. It had deterred me on occasions from paying court to an otherwise eligible *señorita*. I had no fancy to marry parents, cousins and aunts along with the bride.

As my gaze swept quickly over the various members of Magdalena's family, my mind just as swiftly recalled the pleasing fact that, as there seemed to be plenty of male Espinosas, I could safely marry the girl without marrying her entire contingent of relations.

Greetings and introductions were followed by cigars and liqueurs, after we had all ensconced ourselves in the rattan rocking-chairs set in two long rows opposite to each other and flanked by spittoons, all according to custom. On the other side of Magdalena sat her mother, and on my other side sat Ernesto. That I was permitted to sit next to Magdalena argued in my favor, although I knew only too well that three calls at her home would be the limit, unless a marriage proposal should be made by me and accepted—by her father.

As we all rocked back and forth, everyone talking with high-pitched voices, I rebelled inwardly at the social law that would oblige me to do all my courting—even my love-making—in that same brightly lighted *sala*. At best, I could only count on the family obligingly sitting in an adjacent room, with only wide arches for doors, and sight and hearing unimpeded. In other words, every sentence we would speak and every gesture we would make, would be heard and seen by one or more members of the girl's family. Of course, there was the grating outside her window—it was a huge one-story house built around a *patio*—and late at night, once we had been declared fiances, I might risk kissing her through the iron bars after midnight. Perhaps Ernesto would help us out. I had a feeling that he would.

All this occupied my thoughts while I was paying ornate compliments to the mother with my lips, and more tender and subtle ones to Magdalena with my eyes. With a mild irony that her flashing smile told me she understood, I asked her if all the members of her family were present. Then she said, her smile suddenly fading:

"There is one more—my great-grandfather, Don Ricardo, to whom this house belongs."

I stared at her, wonderingly.

"Your *great*-grandfather! Surely he must be quite old."

BOTH Ernesto and the mother overheard my remark, as I was uncomfortably aware by the strange expression that flashed over both their faces. It was a look of acute ill-ease, I might say embarrassment. Magdalena merely puckered her smooth forehead and her mouth drooped at the corners. I gathered that she was rather in awe of her great-grandparent, but from her brother and mother I got a more vague, yet a more disquieting impression.

At that moment, I heard the girl murmur in my ear:

"There he comes, now. Oh, I do hope, Don Pablo," she whispered hurriedly, "that my great-grandfather will—will like you—will find you *simpático*."

I began to hope so myself, very earnestly, as I watched her lovely face grow pale, with what hidden emotion I could only guess. I was aware of a general stirring, a shifting of position and an uneasy expectation that seemed to run, or rather undulate,

along both rows of rocking-chairs. Then I saw—*him!*

As the head of the house of Espinosa entered the *sala*, with slow steps but dignified and erect carriage, my first impression was so startling that for a second I forgot those other men and women in the large room, all of them focusing their gaze on their ancient progenitor.

I SAW a tall, thin figure dressed in black, with the frock coat and stock of a much earlier day, but these details I record merely to give a picture of the man as he came forward. What actually arrested my attention and made me almost gasp aloud in sheer astonishment, was the head that topped the figure. The sparse hair was white as were the eyebrows, but the dark eyes, deep-set, were the eyes of youth and of age combined. They burned and glowed with the aliveness of inexhaustible energy and vitality, but also they held depths of knowledge and experience that sent an odd vibration down my spine. The face was weedily bearded, and the features were like those of a cameo—sharp and fine and colorless. It was a face so thin that the bone structure was as if carved in ivory, but the skin was unbelievably smooth, as if drawn too tight for wrinkles.

Those are the details of a face that I was destined never to forget. I did not even perceive them clearly at the moment, for the thing that caught and held my astounded gaze, was the uncanny sense of an age so extreme that it seemed to be unrelated to time as I could reckon it. First and last, that was my feeling about this very old man; he carried himself like a man of sixty or under, but he might have been six hundred, with that face of ageless contour and color.

All this went through my head as I took a few steps forward and stood at attention, acknowledging the introduction with a deep bow—a foreign bow, that bent me at the waist, horizontally. As I raised my body and, lifting my head, looked straight into those remarkable eyes, I heard a low, vibrant voice say courteously, and with a slight upward inflection:

"Señor Pablo d'Espagne—you are a Spaniard, Señor?"

Having no imaginable reason for lying about my nationality, I said quickly, with another less formal bow:

"No, Señor, I am a Frenchman."

Even now, with a clear head and a vivid memory of that hour, I cannot describe the sense of disaster that seemed to follow on my innocent announcement, stilling movement and hushing sound in that huge room, as if death itself had laid a hand upon each one of us. For a moment, I was more dazed than startled, for nothing I had ever experienced was comparable to that breathless interval that seemed to reach back into the ages but that actually covered a few seconds.

Then I saw the fire of a hate so consuming, burn in those dark and ageless eyes as they stared into mine, that instinctively I drew back as if a knife had been struck at my breast. He held my gaze as he said very slowly:

"So—you are—a *Frenchman!*"

The hate, the venom, the terrible and murderous quality in the voice that spoke those few words, brought a contraction in my throat and widened my eyes in stupefaction. Then the voice added:

"Señor—you are not welcome in my home."

Just that—no more—and yet a sword-thrust could not have been more menacing, nor any insult more humiliating. Then the old man turned the fire of his eyes first upon the parents of Magdalena, then upon her brothers, and finally upon her. I heard her make a low sound that was like a sob of fright, then I saw her great-grandfather turn very slowly around and walk out of the *sala* with the same erect and dignified carriage I had noted on his entrance.

The subsequent ten minutes were a blur of emotions, of words, of movement. I listened to a running babble of apologies and regrets, and through it all I was conscious of Magdalena's light and swift touch on my arm, her eyes that glistened with anger or tears—I was uncertain which—and of Ernesto's sudden grip of my hand and his low-spoken:

"I will accompany you, Pablo. I have something to tell you."

THE next thing I remember was bowing to the various women of the household, bending over Magdalena's small hand which I lifted to my lips, and having my hand shaken by her male relatives. Then Ernesto and I were on the street, walking slowly, arm in arm, in the direction of the Club National.

Ernesto first of all made it clear that he was, and would continue to be, my good friend. Also he intimated, with brotherly frankness, that his sister returned my feeling

for her, and that he, Ernesto, was fully in sympathy with our mutual state of mind and heart. He told me how desperately he regretted the treatment I had suffered at the hands of his ancient relative, and he said he wished he had known that I was French, as he would have warned me to conceal the fact from his family.

"But why, in God's name?" I burst out impatiently. "What has that astounding old man got against my countrymen?"

"Ah, you have said it, Pablo! That is the truth. He *has* something against your countrymen—something so intense that it is useless to fight it. Something that goes back so far that even my father's father knew of it only from hearsay."

I stood still, and turned to stare at my companion.

"You amaze me," I said to him. "You speak as if this old man's time-worn hatred and prejudice regarding my nationality could actually interfere with my personal affairs—with Magdalena's and mine, to be exact, Ernesto."

He put a hand on my arm with affectionate concern.

"You do not understand, my friend. It can do precisely that—interfere with your private affairs—that is to say, so far as my sister is concerned. To be perfectly frank, Pablo, my sister cannot marry you against the wishes of our great-grandfather."

I gave an exclamation of surprise and disbelief. I started walking very fast, although the tropic night was warm, and trying to control my anger, I said:

"Of course that is ridiculous—impossible! Your parents like me—you like me—Magdalena seems to be ready to accept me as a suitor for her hand in marriage. Why should some crazy notion in the head of a very old man interfere with the wishes of those most vitally concerned?"

"I will explain," Ernesto said gently. "I heard my sister tell you that the house we live in belongs to our great-grandfather. I must add that everything belongs to him—our lands that are very valuable, our cattle, and a great deal of money in the bank. As he outlived my grandfather, nothing has been inherited by my father, and will never be, if any one of his children oppose Don Ricardo's wishes in any important matter."

That left me speechless for a moment, then I said eagerly:

"Even so—even if Magdalena and I have to wait a short time—if it seems politic to do so—even so, your great-grandfather will probably die in the near future, and Magdalena and I are both young enough to wait, if necessary, for a year or so."

A SOUND issued from Ernesto's lips that was like a groan.

"A year or so," he repeated, and there was a despairing ring in his voice. "Ah, my friend, if it were to wait for that short time, it would be to laugh and wait patiently—or as patiently as those who love can ever wait. But it is not simple like that. We——" he hesitated, then went on haltingly: "None of us, Pablo, have the slightest hope of outliving my great-grandfather, except my sister who is so young that she does not know what the rest of us know."

Again I stopped in my tracks and stood staring at Ernesto with an astonishment that made him say quickly:

"You think I am mad—you cannot believe such a statement, but it is true, none the less. Not one of us has any idea how old my great-grandfather actually is. My father says that when he was a small boy, the old man looked exactly as he does today. And my father once told me that his father told him that when *he*—my grandfather—was a small boy, there was no difference in the appearance of the man he had been taught to call his *great*-grandfather—you understand, Pablo—*his*, my grandfather's *great*-grandfather! Back of that none of us can go in knowledge or memory. The rest—all the rest—is tradition."

Words, argument, question and answer, were futile in the face of such a statement, and I knew, looking into Ernesto's clear and honest brown eyes—the moon shone directly into them—that he was telling what he accepted as the truth, and that he was quite as normal and sane as I was myself. For a flashing instant I wondered if I *were* sane, if *I* were not imagining the entire unimaginable episode.

Ernesto and I had a drink together on the veranda of the club and it was then that he offered to help his sister and me to meet—secretly or otherwise. For one thing, he said that he would prevail upon his father and mother to permit me to call occasionally at the house and talk with Magdalena in the presence of one or the other of them, but—and here his voice sank and his eyes looked troubled—but I must never enter the house until *after* midnight!

In reply to my surprised interrogation, he told me why midnight must pass before I could be permitted to call at his home. It

appeared that the old man invariably went to his room a few minutes before twelve o'clock at night. This had been his custom always, so far as the oldest member of the family knew. Not only did he go to bed shortly before midnight, but he locked himself in, and the servants and family had orders which not one of them would dare to disobey, not to disturb him by so much as a call or a knock on his door after he had once retired for the night. He never failed to come downstairs for his early coffee every morning at six o'clock.

"So often," Ernesto said, "we have wondered, when the old man has gone to his room just before midnight, if we would not find him dead in his bed some day. But we would not think of going to his room to find out, unless he failed to appear by a late hour in the morning. In that case we would knock on his door, for the breaking of such an old and rigid habit would justify our doing so."

I digested this additional and extraordinary information, then I asked my companion just where this after-midnight calling would carry his sister and myself if our marriage must be dependent upon the death of a man who appeared to be immune to the ordinary acts of God. Did he, I inquired, expect that after a time the old man might change his attitude toward me?

"Never!" Ernesto's ejaculation held no hint of doubt on that point.

"Then—I don't quite see. Do you mean that your sister and I might eventually elope?"

"Your only chance, Pablo, would be for Magdalena to fall ill and die." At my gasp of horror he added quickly: "Of course I mean to pretend to die—pretend where our great-grandfather is concerned. My parents and brothers and I would maneuver it all and the old man would never know. She would have to go to one of our coffee plantations in the hills, and her death and burial would be recorded in Cartagena. In the meantime, you would take her with you—in disguise—on a steamer bound for some other country. You would not be safe anywhere in Colombia. We could work it thus, Pablo."

I stared into his young and romantic eyes, and I laughed softly:

"My dear friend, I've always sought adventure and romance, but, frankly, if I cannot marry Magdalena and take her away with me without play-acting, I'm afraid I shall have to wait until she is willing to defy her great-grandfather's absurd prejudices."

"That," Ernesto said somberly, "would harm all the rest of us far more than it would Magdalena. She would have you to take care of her, and if her love were sufficient to take the place of her large inheritance, all would be well—for *her*. But it would mean that every one of us would also be cut off in our great-grandfather's will. In fact, he has often threatened to give away his fortune at once if ever one of us should go against his wishes. For us who, for generations, have had wealth and position, it would be very sad, Pablo."

It was at that moment, just as I was draining the contents of my glass, that a thought came to me which I expressed without the slightest compunction:

"CONCEIVABLY, my dear friend, it might occur to someone, one of these days, gently but effectively to put your ancient relative out of the way—permanently, you understand."

Ernesto's jaw dropped perceptibly as he stared at me.

"You mean—someone might—*murder* him?"

"That is what I mean," I answered calmly.

He was silent for a moment, then he gave a nervous laugh:

"Not one of us would ever resort to violence, and even if we were capable of doing so, it would avail us nothing."

I told him that I failed to get his full meaning, and then he said something that really appalled me:

"Not a living person could kill him. It has often been tried. Not by any of us, but by outside enemies. He has had many miraculous escapes through the years. Many attempts have been made on his life. No one attempts it now. It is part of the tradition, that no human agency can destroy him!"

I am not ashamed to confess that I felt a cold shiver throughout my body, as I heard my young companion calmly state what I have quoted. Again the fear entered my mind that Ernesto was insane, but another long look into his eyes convinced me that he was not. It was beyond me, and I said so with vehemence. Perhaps it was to change the tenor of our strange talk that Ernesto said, putting a friendly hand on my arm as we rose to leave the club:

"I will help you in every way, my friend. I shall arrange horseback rides for Magda-

lena—alone with me, you understand—and then you can join us out in the country and I will ride ahead for miles. I know lonely bridle-paths where we would encounter only natives from the hills."

I told him that I would welcome such opportunities to talk alone with his sister. By one of those memory tricks that cannot be explained, my mind flashed back to the night when the Will-o'-the-Wisp frightened my mule.

"Apropos of riding," I said casually, "I had an odd experience the night I first met Magdalena. I left the *baile* about twelve o'clock and rode back to the sugar estate, and my thoughts were full of your sister. Suddenly a Will-o'-the-Wisp came out of the hedgerow and bobbed across the road, right between my mule's hoofs. It sent the poor mule into a panic and, I confess, rather startled me. All the years I've been in the tropics, I had never seen such a thing."

Ernesto's dark eyes had opened very wide and it seemed to me that his olive cheek turned a trifle pale.

"You—you, also—you *saw* that terrifying ball of fire?"

I was surprised by his tone and expression. I told him that I did not regard a natural physical phenomenon such as the Will-o'-the-Wisp as a thing to terrify a human being of intelligence.

"Why," I said with a laugh, "what is it but a gaseous formation that emanates from dead animal or vegetable matter? It throws out a phosphorescent light very similar to the phosphorescence from fish seen in tropical waters."

Ernesto lowered his eyes, shrugged his shoulders and said:

"That may be, Pablo, but there are those in Cartagena who would tell you otherwise."

Without further parley, he extended his hand to bid me good night, and soon I was on mule-back riding to the sugar estate. My mind was in somewhat of a whirl, thought and emotion inextricably confused. In short, I was not fit for calm consideration of the strange events of the evening. I felt as exhausted as if I had been through a physical ordeal.

In the course of the next few days, I made many but cautious inquiries about the family Espinosa. There seemed to be no restraint in discussion of the various members of the clan until I came to Don Ricardo, the great-grandfather. Whenever his name was mentioned, I was conscious of something strange and sinister in the complete silence that rose up before me like an impenetrable wall. There was nothing that I could define; it was merely a shrug of the shoulder here, a lowering of the eyes there, and always and everywhere what struck me as a deep-seated aversion to discussing the old man with a stranger. I could elicit no information whatever regarding the remarkable being of whom Ernesto had given me those few unbelievable facts—or what he appeared to regard as facts.

True to his promise, Ernesto did maneuver with his parents for me to call at their home late in the evening about twice a week. On such occasions I was permitted to talk with Magdalena in one corner of the huge *sala*, while two or three members of the family sat at a discreet distance—and by discreet I mean that they could not hear our whispered or murmured converse, and they could only see us by deliberately turning their heads.

It was all very delightful on the surface, but in proportion as my love for Magdalena increased, so did my unhappiness and restless impatience with the situation. By tacit agreement, we left her aged and awe-inspiring ancestor out of our conversation, although both of us knew that he was seldom absent from our thoughts.

ERNESTO carried out his suggestion as to taking his sister for horseback rides far into the untrodden by-paths in the direction of the hills, and it was many a secret and joyous ride I had with her, by sunlight and by moonlight, the latter being my preference. To sum up this interval of peace and love, it would have been quite perfect but for the gnawing remembrance of that sinister old man who stood between me and the full realization of my happiness.

Obviously, things could not go on thus indefinitely. My impatience began to intrude upon the pleasure of being with the girl I loved, and by degrees I reached a determination to force the issue. Perhaps my adventurous blood ran faster than the leisurely pace of those weeks of quiet love-making. Perhaps I longed for intrigue and danger. And what we long for, eventually we seek.

On one of our rides into the hills, we came one day upon an old Indian woman whose hut stood some distance from the bridle-path. No one knew why she had left her tribe, but there she was, living quite alone with a dog and a goat. It was an ideal set-

ting for mystery and all the weird prophetic power which I knew that the Guajiros Indians were said to possess.

We dismounted and after greeting her, Ernesto, who could talk her patois better than I, asked her to tell our fortunes. She agreed, with a lethargic indifference characteristic of her people. What she told Ernesto was so commonplace that I will only note her predicting that he would inherit great wealth and power. His naïve acceptance of her prophecy as gospel truth irritated me.

Then she read Magdalena's palm. She halted, and there were long silences during the process that got on my nerves. Finally she told Magdalena that she would eventually attain her heart's desire, but not until much had happened to threaten her happiness and endanger the life of one whom she loved. My young fiancée, as superstitious apparently as her brother, was deeply affected by the Indian's guttural and cryptic warnings.

Vaguely annoyed, I declined to offer my palm for her inspection. Magdalena became so distressed that finally I held out my hand to the old crone, with a laugh that made her raise her head and stare into my eyes with an expression that brought the blood to my face. Suddenly and unaccountably, I felt as if I had spurned and outraged the high Gods who control the destinies of Man.

The old Indian woman took my hand in both of hers—brown and bony hands they were—and bent her head over it. There was a short instant of silence, then, to my amazement and with a gesture as violent as it was unexpected, she flung my hand from her, saying:

"I will not read your palm, unless the young lady, your sweetheart, wishes me to do so."

BEFORE I could speak, Magdalena bent forward, saying eagerly:

"But yes, yes, certainly I wish it!"

Wondering and concealing my scorn, I held out my hand a second time. The old Indian studied it in utter silence. Then she asked for my other hand and compared one with the other. There was something decidedly disquieting in this silent absorption. Then slowly she lifted her head and looked first at Magdalena and then at Ernesto, fixing the latter with her strangely fathomless eyes. What she said to him was no more startling than the oddly vibrating tone of her voice:

"You have not told your friend all that there is to tell—all that you know full well, Don Ernesto." (I saw him start in surprise, because she knew his name.) "Go back to Cartagena and tell him the truth as you know it. Do not lie to him. Do not conceal anything from him!"

ERNESTO had gone very white, but his eyes did not waver as they stared into the face of the old Indian woman. Magdalena also had paled, and her dark eyes flashed eager and astounded questioning from the woman's dark and bony face to her brother's handsome one. I watched the three of them and my only sensation was an intense and increasing curiosity to find out. Then, to my further surprise, Ernesto turned to me, saying quietly:

"I will do as she advises, Pablo. There is much that I have not told you. Tomorrow night, after I have taken counsel with my parents, I will meet you and tell you all that I have concealed from you."

I heard Magdalena give a low cry of fear and astonishment, as she seized her brother's arm, saying excitedly:

"But what is it, Brother, that you are going to tell Pablo? What ugly and fearsome secret is this that you and my parents have kept from me?"

Gently, he quieted her, reminded her that she was so young—the youngest of them all—and that it had not been deemed wise or necessary to tell her anything that could disturb her peace and happiness. But now—yes, now—since this had come about, they would tell her, as, in any case, she must know sooner or later.

It was all irritatingly vague, and a sense of unreality brought another uncontrollably mocking laugh to my lips, parting them as my eyes went from one to another of the three persons—the brother and sister and the old crone. Once again, her piercing eyes gazed into mine.

Something in the old Indian's expression quickened the beat of my pulse. Then she turned away, and in silence Magdalena, her brother and I mounted our horses and rode back to Cartagena. I may add that few words were spoken by us on the homeward ride, and those few ran far afield from what lay uppermost in our minds. On the edge of the town I bade them *au revoir*. Twilight was descending or I would not have ventured that far in company with Magdalena. When they had cantered out of sight, I followed at a slower gait, planning to eat, drink and make merry at the club,

and later visit the quaint, partly unroofed theater where a strolling company of Spanish players were performing that night. My customary impulse would have been to avoid the execrable acting I knew that I must expect to see, but my nerves were on edge and anything would serve to distract my thoughts.

I saw Magdalena in a box at the theater, but I merely bowed and made no attempt to approach her. I felt that I must wait to hear what Ernesto had to tell me before further pursuing my love affair with his sister.

I spent what was left of the night at the b, and before daybreak my sorrel stallion and I were on our way back to the ugar estate. I must here mention that I had recently bought the animal and reserved my mule for long-distance rides in the hills, where a mule is surer-footed than a horse. The pony was of pure Arab stock and as fearless as he was high-spirited.

Curiously enough, although I had traveled that same road many times since the night when I had encountered the Will-o'-the-Wisp, my mind flashed back to it as I turned the bend in the road where I had seen the ball of gaseous phosphorescence that first and only time.

Before the faint lightening of the darkness that precedes dawn, there is always, in the tropics, a chilly dampness and a hush spread over nature, that is as palpable as the mist. It is a hush that seems to belong to death rather than to life. My senses registered all this, as memory went back to that strange encounter at that very bend of the road.

Suddenly I saw it—that ball of fire—just as I had seen it before, only this time it was some feet ahead of me and it was coming from the opposite direction—the side of the highway back of which lay the cemetery. It careened quickly across the road and into the hedge that lined a field. My Arab pony displayed no terror as the mule had done, although he snorted and shook his head angrily. In that instant I was seized by an impulse that I followed on the second.

With a twist of my wrist I turned the pony facing the way we had come, then we crashed through the hedgerow and across the field. Some distance ahead, I could see the Will-o'-the-Wisp. We galloped after it, and as we came nearer seemed to take on conscious life and ding and springing movement that carried it with uncanny speed almost out of sight and reach. How shall I describe that strange and senseless chase! Remember, sky and earth were still dark, so that the phosphorescent light of the thing I was pursuing could be seen for some distance.

By some strange working of Nature, the Will-o'-the-Wisp kept to the fields, and I and my pony likewise.

By a roundabout, circuitous way, we approached the city's outskirts. Not a sound nor a creature stirring, and still the sky was as dark as night. Ahead of me went bobbing, almost flying, that strange phenomenon which, as I had stressed to Ernesto, I believed to be merely the emanation of dead vegetable or animal matter.

On—on, now on a deserted street that led, as I knew, to the portion of the city occupied by its wealthier residents. There was no room for reason in my mind. All I could hear was the thud of my pony's hoofs; all I could see was that phosphorescent formation ahead of me, and not so far ahead by this time. If I had been capable of reason, of aught but a boyish thrill in pursuit, I would have wondered why the thing did not make for the country instead of the town.

Still on and on, turning this corner, flying down that empty street! Suddenly I recognized the street, and in the same breath I recognized a house on a corner to the right scarcely a block ahead. And in that second I saw something that tightened my hand on the bridle—throwing the pony back on his haunches—that made my eyes bulge in their sockets, and that almost stopped the beating of my heart. The Will-o'-the-Wisp was but a few yards ahead of me—I saw it reach the large, square Espinosa dwelling, and I saw it run up the low stone wall like a veritable ball of lightning, of quicksilver, direct to a window on the northeast corner of the house, through whose iron bars it disappeared!

Call me a madman; but that is what I saw, fantastic and incredible as it may sound!

Why did Don Ricardo Espinosa, the legendary and sinister ancient, hate Frenchmen with an unforgiving fury that nothing could alter? The confession that Ernesto is about to make to his friend solves the astounding mystery. This point, as well as the significance of the uncanny Will-o'-the-Wisp, is cleared up in the concluding instalment, to appear next month—the October issue, on the news stands August 23rd.

When Chinatown Was HAUNTED

By PATRICK CARPENTER

Former Detective-Sergeant

As told to ALLAN VAN HOESEN

A POLICEMAN is about the last person in the world you'd expect to admit he'd seen a ghost. But I saw one; more than once. It played the leading rôle in my biggest case. And I'm a policeman, a hard-boiled New York City copper. That is, I was, from shortly after my twenty-first birthday until I'd passed fifty-one. Then I retired on my pension. I did a trick of a full dozen years as a pavement-pounder and roundsman, after which I was a district plain-clothes man, then a Headquarters detective and finally a detective-sergeant.

For the last decade, I've been a special officer in a bank in Wall Street. There daily, wearing a gray uniform, I've sat from ten until three in a comfortable chair near the front door—where I might spot any of the easy-money gentry who might venture inside—my waist-line growing larger, my thatch acquiring venerable frost, my thoughts busy mostly with the past and its adventures.

Of all of these, the one which comes most often to mind, which still tantalizes me because of its inexplicable features, was my nerve-racking experience with the phantom of the beautiful Ah Lu, known throughout the quarter as "The Emperor's Lily." Yes, I often think of her, and shall until I pass on—of Ah Lu and the sacred talisman given her by a Chinese high priest; a mysterious golden tarantula with hypnotic ruby eyes, and whose sting was more deadly than that of any live insect of the species.

I recall, as though it were yesterday, when I was first assigned to Chinatown. My successful efforts in a particularly involved

The death of the beauty known as "The Emperor's Lily" was the starting point of an unparalleled mystery among the yellow men

case had brought promotion to the grade of detective-sergeant. At the time, vicious crime was in full swing in the district, with murder of frequent occurrence and practically no convictions because of the refusal of the yellow denizens to squeal to the white *lo fungs*. The Chief's orders were for me to attach myself to the Elizabeth Street station, which had supervision of the quarter, and to go the limit to uncover some of the Asiatic criminals.

I was reasonably young, ambitious, confident of my ability and no more superstitious than a cigar store Indian. Bill Clancy, a veteran of many years experience in Chinatown, was ordered to introduce me to its intricacies. My first turn with Bill through Mott, Pell and Doyers Streets was made at night.

AS we turned from the quarter at the Bowery, my companion drew me into the shadow of an "L" pillar, with: "Pat, I'm going to put you wise to Chinatown, then you'll have a better understanding when we go back and I begin pointing out the places and people you should know. And if you don't believe me—me who has spent the best years of my life there—you'll be jolted out of your cockiness in a way which will make your hair curl."

"All right. But nothing will surprise me after what I've been through in Hell's Kitchen, the Gas House District and on the waterfronts."

He grunted. "You'll learn that that was humdrum compared with what you're going against in the quarter. This place is almost as Oriental as Canton; customs are followed which date back thousands of years, and you'll never be able to tell what the Chinos will do the next second. The atmosphere is mysterious, and things happen every day which no white man can explain unless he credits the supernatural."

I grinned. "To me the occult is a joke. Any ghost will run from a gun or a nightstick."

"Have it your way. Some day you'll wake up. But I tell you Chinatown is mysterious, secretive, opium-drugged and—unnatural. Every living thing which goes there and remains for a time, becomes a different species. Even a cat or a dog which drifts into the quarter soon becomes different; sly, soft-footed, slippery. As for the other things——"

"Listen, Bill," I said. "In my kid days my grandmother used to tell me about the fairies and the ghosts she'd seen in Ireland. I laughed at her, as any American school boy would. Afterward I read a lot about the mysterious Orient, with its devils and specters. It's all rubbish. Let's go back. What I want to learn is, the kind of criminals who live in those ramshackle buildings; how they make their getaways to the tunnels under the streets."

Fortunately for my peace of mind I did not realize that in the imminent future—long before I had grasped even the A, B, C of the district's puzzles—I would play a leading part in an adventure which would forever banish all scepticism concerning things supernatural. I passed the remaining hours of the night absorbing pertinent facts and noting what Clancy pointed out, meanwhile soaking in the exotic atmosphere of the place—all new to me—including the pungent odors from the restaurants, the piping of reed instruments and the wailing of native fiddles, the gaily-colored lanterns overhead and the brilliantly lighted shop windows filled with jade trinkets, Nagoya porcelains and grotesque bronzes.

For some hours the following afternoon, I studied the quarter by daylight, but I joined Clancy at night and he continued tutoring me. Unluckily, around midnight, a sharp east wind began blowing in from the river, bringing with it a fine drizzle which made patrolling, even with collar turned high, mighty disagreeable. This soon sent the sightseers scurrying for home and drove most of the natives to their warrens.

IT was along about three in the morning that Bill and I decided to take a last walk through the quarter, then call it a day, all the signs indicating that serious crime was not to be anticipated. We rounded from Pell into Mott Street, which appeared to be deserted, and headed for the lower end with the Chatham Square elevated station as our objective. We had covered some distance and were almost abreast of the real joss house at Number 16, when we heard

the sound of pattering footsteps behind us. A figure was staggering across the roadway in our direction.

Within seconds it reached us, proving to be that of an elderly native in an elaborate Oriental costume, but wearing not even a cap; who swung his arms wildly and swayed. Even in the half-light, I noted the signs of fearful agony in his features. Paying no heed to Clancy's, "Good evening, Fung-Sung-Lo," he grasped my companion's arm, probably to steady himself, then pointed to me with, "Is he—like you—a detective?"

"Sure. What's the matter?"

The elderly Chinese struggled to master his agitation. "Mr. Clancy, something fearful has happened—at my home. Will you and your friend follow me? Don't attract attention. I want none of my countrymen to see us together."

He turned and fairly raced back across the street. Clancy grasped my arm. "Steady. Take your time. I know where he lives. When one like him comes to the police, all hell must have broken loose, so keep your eyes open."

"Who is he?" I asked, as I fell in with Clancy's measured step, crossed to the opposite side, then moved along in the shadows.

"He's Fung-Sung-Lo, one of the wealthiest and most respected men in the quarter. I know him well. He's on the square. Represents the Six Companies of San Francisco here. He was educated at Oxford; speaks English perfectly. He lives with his ward, Ah Lu——" He paused, gasping, at the same time gripping my wrist hard.

"That's it, I'll bet. Come on; faster."

"What's it?"

"AH LU. She's the prettiest Chinese girl I ever saw and only seventeen. Her skin's almost white and there's practically no slant to her eyes. They call her the Emperor's Lily. All the wealthy Chinos have asked to marry her. Fung wouldn't consent. It's a gamble she's been kidnaped——"

At that moment, we turned into the doorway of a tenement close to Bayard Street; into a shabby hallway, dimly lighted. The old Chinese was there, leaning against the wall. I glanced up the stairway and was startled to see outlined beneath a sputtering gas jet the figure of a native woman—or perhaps it was a girl, she seemed so small and delicate—wearing a blouse and pantaloons of crimson and black. I touched Clancy and pointed, but the figure had disappeared when I looked again.

Fung placed a finger across his lips for silence, beckoned to us and started above. We followed, keeping close to the wall to prevent the stair boards creaking. We reached the top floor. Another feeble flame enabled us to see him take a key from his pocket and open the door to the rear apartment. We followed him into the blackness. But, as the door closed, he touched a button and there came a glare of electricity which almost blinded me for the moment. Then I realized I was in the most luxuriously furnished room I ever had glimpsed; its walls hung with cunningly embroidered silks and satins, a profusion of lacquer and teakwood furniture scattered about over a floor covered deep with rugs of softest texture.

The old man mastered the agitation which had caused him to cover his eyes as soon as he flashed on the lights, turned, grasped Clancy's arm and spoke, while tears streamed down his wrinkled, parchment-like cheeks.

"Ah Lu, my ward, is dead; dead by her own hand."

"You can't mean that—she was too carefree and light hearted. Where is she?"

"In there." He pointed to the room beyond, from which shone a streak of light between the velvet drapes. "I found her—when I returned—but a short time ago. I knew something was amiss the instant I turned on the lights, for the devil screen which Ah Lu always places before her door when she retires to keep out the evil spirits was not in place." He pointed and I noted a screen of white rice straw propped against the wall.

"But where is that old servant of yours?" asked Clancy.

"Ah Foon? I don't know. He has disappeared."

"Disappeared?" We repeated the word in unison, both struck by the sinister significance of his reply.

Fung-Sung-Lo shook his head decisively, as if to wave away our suspicion, then pushed aside the curtains, beckoning us to enter the bedchamber of Ah Lu. Clancy and I went forward eagerly, but paused on the threshold, both gripped by one of the most amazing sights I ever had beheld. Upon a low couch heaped high with many silk coverings, her right side toward us, lay the delicately rounded body of a beautiful Chinese girl, clad in black and crimson

satin blouse and pantaloons, fur slippers still upon her feet, as if she had dropped there to doze while awaiting her guardian's return. One would have believed she still slept, had it not been for the white scarf across her breast upon which was a telltale crimson stain.

THEN, with a suddenness which sent me cold all over, I realized that the figure before me was dressed in clothing identical with that worn by the girl I had seen in the hallway; the girl who had snuffed out like a shadow. What could it mean? Was I already face to face with one of those supernatural situations of which Clancy had warned me? Was what I had seen on the landing the spirit of this dead girl? With a smothered oath, I forced the thought from me. It must be a coincidence. I had beheld some Chinese girl who lived on a floor below. That must be the answer. I decided not to speak of the matter to Clancy, but to prove my point by later investigation. The actual situation facing me was too compelling for me to permit my thoughts to go wool-gathering.

Going close to the couch, I lifted an end of the scarf and held it toward Fung.

"I placed it there," he said. "I couldn't stand it—to see the wound. Then I became half crazed. I ran outside—for help, I guess, white man's help. You two happened to be the first I met." He shrugged. "I hoped to keep the disgrace of suicide from reaching my countrymen. It is as well I met you—the police would have learned of it some way, sooner or later."

Clancy nodded for me to go ahead. He was getting old. The sight of the stark body of Ah Lu, whom he had known in her happy life, appeared to have sapped his nerve, affected him almost as it had the venerable Chinese.

"Where's the knife, or whatever she used?" I questioned.

"Near the couch, on the other side. I—I couldn't touch it."

Somehow, I began to sense that something more was amiss than Fung had said; that I faced a mystery beyond the average crime, and one which would test my utmost skill to solve. It was a sort of sixth sense hunch which in times past had warned me to pry beneath surface conditions. For just a moment my half defined suspicion made me study the old man closely. A yellow man was a new puzzle to me. But there appeared no hint of sham in this one's agony, and I practically decided he was not directly identified with the girl's death. Still, how had this frail little woman, after inflicting a death wound upon herself, been able to withdraw the weapon?

Whipping away the scarf, I bent close. The condition of the blood about the gash directly over the heart indicated Ah Lu had been dead but a comparatively short time. I looked at the arm and hand which lay by her right side. There was no crimson stain upon them.

REPLACING the scarf, I crossed around to the left side of the couch, where I discovered the answer to one of my mental queries. The left hand had dropped to the floor and near the bent, stiff fingers lay a dagger with a five-inch blade and a handle of ivory inlaid with black jade. Fingers and dagger were spattered with blood.

Already my suspicion was beginning to receive support. I had noted a circumstance he had overlooked. I beckoned to Fung and pointed to the weapon. "Whose is that?"

He swallowed hard, then, "It belonged to my ward. It is one of a set of four. At times she used them in her hair, instead of the customary ivory pins."

"Where are the others?"

He pointed toward a velvet-covered casket on a near-by dresser. I threw back the lid. It was empty. Fung also saw, and his hands went wide in sign of bewilderment. "She always kept them there. Since they are gone——"

"Yes. Possibly your servant took them."

"Never," he said, shaking his head.

While the girl had been killed by a dagger which belonged to her, somewhat upset my hastily and half-formed conclusions, the fact that the others had disappeared gave me encouragement. I glanced about. There was just one window in the room, directly behind the couch and about four feet distant. I examined the catch, only to be disappointed. The window was fastened. Nodding to Clancy to remain, I moved quickly through the four rooms of the flat. Every window was secured. There was but one door, that opening into the hallway. Returning, I asked the Chinaman, "Was the door locked when you returned?"

"Yes; but why do you inquire?"

"Listen, Fung-Sung-Lo. I am your friend and I want to help you. But we can learn the truth only if you give me your entire confidence."

"The truth? I don't understand."

"Tell me, was your ward left handed?"

"Ah Lu left handed? No—positively."

"Then why, if she was right handed, did she use her left hand to stab herself?"

For a full moment the old man stared at me, his eyes widening as he grasped the significance of my query. Then he tottered around the couch, noted the circumstance I had indicated, and turned upon me, fairly quivering with excitement. "Exactly what do you think?"

"I believe this," I said, biting off my words. "Ah Lu didn't take her own life. She was murdered. The killer came upon her while she slept, stabbed her, then endeavored to make it appear she had committed suicide. In his excitement he made a great mistake; he placed the dagger on the wrong side, smeared blood on the wrong hand."

I DON'T know what reaction I was expecting from my thrust, but what happened was not what I had anticipated. Raising his hands above his head the old man cried: "Thanks be to the sages. Thanks to the high gods in Paradise. The soul of Ah Lu is safe. She has gone to Heaven on the dragon's back. Better to be killed than to die by her own hand." He dropped to his knees and lowered his head to the floor, as if in prayer.

Clancy came close and whispered: "The Chinese believe that most of their women are without souls. But Fung told me this girl had a soul, because she's the daughter of a Mandarin, long dead, and a descendant of the ancient warrior, Wong the Terrible. If she'd committed suicide, she couldn't have gone to Paradise."

The old man arose and faced us, a new calm in his features. And from then on, he gave no outward indication of how the tragedy which had come to his household affected him. At the time, I thought his altered mood was because Ah Lu's death wound was not self inflicted. Later I guessed another reason, that he hoped to uncover and punish the killer alone, in accordance with the yellow code.

After another look toward the body of his ward, he turned to me with: "I believe you, sir, and thank you. If the suddenness of this crime had not betrayed my wits, I would have realized she did not kill herself. She has paid the forfeit of not following my warning. She put aside her talisman once too often."

"What do you mean by that?"

His gaze flashed about the room, past a chair upon which lay a violin, to a divan in a far corner. From this he picked up a chain and approached us; a chain of hand-wrought links to which was attached a hideous golden tarantula with flashing rubies for eyes. As he held it up for inspection, the thing seemed to fascinate me and I reached for the gruesome bauble.

"On your life don't," he cried, leaping backward. "This spider will sting as though alive—unless you know how to handle it—and its poison is more deadly than a real one. It is the talisman given Ah Lu by the high priest at the temple at Taiynen, her father's dearest friend. While she wore it, anyone who attempted to harm her would have been stung and died almost upon the instant. But the chain was heavy and she put it aside, often. I warned her never to sleep unless it were about her neck. Tonight she disobeyed and——" He paused significantly for a moment. "I fear my ward has been neglecting many Chinese teachings since Mrs. Remsen has been schooling her."

"Who is she?" I asked Clancy.

"She's one of the women at the Rescue Mission; all right and trusted by the Chinese. She's been teaching the girl to speak and read English."

By this time the jumble of superstition and crossed clues had gotten on my nerves and I lost patience. "Listen, Fung, we're getting nowhere with all this. Your ward has been murdered; possibly by your servant——"

"Never by him. He was Ah Lu's servant by blood oath. His wife brought her into the world. He'd have died a thousand deaths before he'd have let harm come to her."

"But he's gone. Why wasn't he here to protect her?"

"Ah Lu was wilful. She probably sent him on an errand, though I ordered her not to, when I was absent. Tonight, since six o'clock, I was with others of the Six Companies discussing business. Ah Lu probably sent Ah Foon on a mission, he was captured, possibly. Then the murderer——"

"But who do you suspect? Who would want to kill this girl?"

He shook his head, his features a blank. I understood. My surmise had been correct. He guessed the identity of the killer. He desired vengeance without white man's interference. "Very well," I said roughly, "but I'll get the Inspector. Maybe he'll make you talk. Keep your eyes open,

Clancy, and learn if anything's been stolen. And if that damned spider is as poisonous as he says, have him put it out of harm's way."

I went down the steps as quickly and as noiselessly as I could, wondering if Inspector Church would razz me for not notifying him sooner. I hoped the information I had gained would cover me. Back in the street, I found the rain had turned to a thick fog. I could see no one. Reaching the Bowery, I discovered an all-night saloon with a booth telephone, connected with the Inspector and outlined my case, giving him my reasons for believing it a murder and stating that old Fung-Sung-Lo would not talk.

"Of course not," he replied, "and the killer will go scot free unless he gets him. Damn the Chinese, anyway. I've got a yellow-belly who's been here in the station since five last night. He says he's been threatened and would be killed if he went home before daylight. Then he'll get his tong friends to protect him. I'll be over as soon as I can dig up a Medical Examiner."

I returned to the quarter, moving slowly lest I pass Fung's house in the thickening fog. I was half way through Pell Street when, out of the murk, appeared the figure of a Chinese girl, standing out in as bold relief as though it were daylight. I gave a cry of fear and my hair seemed tugging at the scalp, for the figure I beheld was that of the dead Ah Lu—or the girl I had seen on the stairway—or maybe both were one and the same. Frightened more than I ever had been in my whole life, I wanted to run. But I couldn't. The one before me—my numbed brain told me it was a phantom—held me as though my feet were weighted. Then the figure beckoned, turned and moved. I followed, stumbling. I don't know whether I closed my eyes—what happened—but suddenly I realized the apparition had vanished, that I was alone in a doorway.

It was a considerable time before I was able to quiet my jumping nerves, force myself to sane thinking. Then I tried to convince myself that my eyes had played me tricks, that my imagination had deceived me. But my reason told me differently. I stepped to the walk to fix my whereabouts. I was before the mission. This was the place where Mrs. Remsen, Ah Lu's teacher, lived. Could it be that what I had seen had deliberately led me to this place for a purpose?

Determined to see the matter through, I rang the bell and before long I was alone with the woman. When she had recovered somewhat from the shock of my tragic news, she replied freely to my questions. From the time Fung-Sung-Lo brought Ah Lu to the quarter, she informed me, the wealthiest Chinese there had offered large sums for her hand in marriage. All offers had been refused, the girl vetoing them. The disappointed ones accepted the ruling with fair grace, because Fung was a man of power and respected for his wisdom, and the girl's parentage placed her above ordinary Chinese women.

However, there was one who did not bow to the refusal of his suit—Po-Yang, an importer and one who was reputed to control the quarter's gambling ring. He was a distant relative of Fung. As such, he had been a welcome visitor to the old man's home before the arrival of Ah Lu. And he continued to go there even after his marriage offer had been refused. The girl disliked and feared him because, should her guardian die, he, as next of kin, would take possession of her. It was because Ah Lu desired to learn American customs and the language that Mrs. Remsen had been retained as her teacher. They were real friends.

SOME months back, she had persuaded Fung to bring the girl to the mission one Sunday afternoon when a concert was given there. Among the performers was Stephen Durston, a handsome, dreamy-eyed youth who played a violin as if inspired, but whose deformed shoulders more than offset his natural gifts. Ah Lu became infatuated with his playing and, after weeks of coaxing, persuaded her guardian to permit Durston to teach her. (I recalled the violin I had seen in the girl's room.) He gave her a lesson only once a week, but in a brief time mischief was done; the two had learned to love each other. Fung had been consulted, but had frowned upon all talk of marriage, insisting it could result only in unhappiness. Mrs. Remsen did not know whether Po-Yang was aware of the situation and could not tell how Durston had accepted Fung's mandate.

With the names of two possible suspects, I believed I possessed a hot lead and at once made my way to Fung's home. The Inspector and a Medical Examiner were there. My superior drew me aside, told me that nothing had been stolen, that blood had destroyed all fingerprints on the dagger and that the doctor agreed Ah Lu had been

killed, the wound indicating a man of considerable strength had delivered the blow.

"This is going to be a tough case to untangle," he added, "for the old man is out of it and I'm inclined to believe his guess that the servant has been kidnaped. As all windows were fastened, the killer probably picked the lock."

Without theorizing or mentioning my encounter with the phantom, I told the Inspector I had questioned Mrs. Remsen and repeated her information. I noted the hint of a smile in his expression while I talked. Then he said: "This Po-Yang is out, at least as far as actually committing the crime. He's the Chino who spent all night at the station."

"Planting an alibi, eh?"

"Possibly. You can't beat these yellow boys for trickiness. But you've done well, Carpenter. We've got some straight information and may be able to learn who did the job for Po-Yang—if he had it done. But I'm inclined to think Durston is the more likely party. I know him; good to the poor but moody when crossed, the result of his affliction. He may have become ugly after Fung turned him down and killed the girl so no one else could get her. She may have given him a key to this place long ago. Find him, try and surprise him into an admission, then bring him to the station. I'll finish here."

THE Inspector's statement worried me more than a little, as I left him to perform my mission. He certainly considered Durston under suspicion and I hated to think that I might be the one to trap him into admissions which would head him toward the chair. However, a girl had been killed. Her color didn't matter. If he were guilty——

I paused half way down the flight of steps, almost as startled as I had been on previous occasions. For below me was the phantom of Ah Lu. This time, however, I was able to pull myself together quickly, for I was convinced it intended me no harm, that it actually was trying to help me solve the problem of the killing. After a moment's hesitation I resumed the descent, the apparition always just ahead of me. When we reached the lower hallway, I was surprised that, instead of going into the street, it led me through to a rear yard, then disappeared.

Satisfied that, as on former occasions, the phantom had a purpose in guiding me, I looked about over the clutter of debris. It was an easy task, for daylight had come and the fog had lifted. Upon the instant, I noted something important. Beneath the fire-escape was an overturned ash barrel, its contents scattered. Beside it was a box. I guessed their significance. The murderer had attempted to reach the lower platform by standing upon the barrel, but it had overturned with him. Then he had used the box. Hurrying forward, I bent over the ashes; then gave a sigh of relief. There were clearly defined prints; prints of cork-soled Chinese shoes, a point in Durston's favor. The phantom had led me to the spot to divert suspicion from the one she had loved in life.

Jumping upon the box, I reached the platform, then made the ascent, studying closely the iron-work as I advanced. Nowhere did I note ashes. And some slight deposits would have remained, despite the drizzle, if the unknown had gone up wearing the soiled shoes. Maybe he hadn't gone up; maybe my theory was wrong! But hope returned when I reached the upper window. For it opened directly into Ah Lu's bed-chamber. And there were marks showing where the intruder had cut away the wood until he could slip a knife through and move the catch. Right then I thought I had clinched part of the case. The killer, probably a hireling of Po-Yang, had thrown away his shoes, hoping to destroy that clue. Once in the room, he had pushed the catch back into place, murdered the girl with one of her own daggers and made his escape through the hallway door, overturning the devil screen in his flight. Why he had taken the other daggers I couldn't guess.

In response to my raps the Inspector, a bit surprised, opened the window and admitted me. Again saying nothing concerning the phantom, I told what I had learned and my belief.

"I'll have half a dozen men search for the shoes," he said. "But you must hurry uptown and interview Durston. While you may be right, I want that youth questioned closely, want to learn where he was all last night."

REACHING Durston's home, I learned he had just returned; a fact which gave me some uneasy minutes. However, when he came to me, his appearance was that of a man thoroughly at ease. But I jolted him with a blunt statement of the killing, as I'd been ordered to do. His reaction was

pitiful. He would not believe until I had repeated the facts of the tragedy. Then he collapsed and for minutes sobbed like a child. When he had recovered a measure of composure, he asked some question; then appeared to realize the real purpose of my visit.

After telling me he had been at the home of a friend from the previous afternoon to a few minutes before, he called this person on the telephone, then turned the instrument over to me. The replies to my queries soon satisfied me he had been far from the quarter long before, as well as at the time of, the killing.

Returning downtown, I went to the station and reported to the Inspector. My statement did not appear to surprise him. "Clancy found the missing shoes among some rubbish in the next yard," he said. "They're mighty interesting."

From a drawer he drew a pair of native low-cut shoes with cork soles, still covered with ashes. But the most significant thing about them was, that a hole had been cut in the outer side of the right one, probably to relieve their owner from pressure upon a deformity or a bunion.

"These may send some Chino to the chair," I suggested.

"I hope so. Don't ask questions openly about a Chinaman wearing such a shoe, for I want to keep that clue quiet. But be on the watch. Maybe you'll find him among those at Number —— Mott street, Po-Yang's home. Po's there, with a bunch of tong gunmen guarding him. You can invent an excuse for getting into the place without letting Po-Yang know he's under suspicion."

The funeral ceremonies over the body of Ah Lu were held the next afternoon in the flat of Fung. Desiring to avoid all publicity possible, he permitted none but a few intimates to attend. The Inspector and I were there, sent for specially. After telling us that his agents had failed to uncover any clue concerning his missing servant, he stated that, through the influence of the Chinese Ambassador at Washington, he would receive next day the necessary documents to have his ward's body sent to China for burial. Receiving Church's permission to accompany the body to the Pacific coast, he said he would leave next day, promising to return very soon.

When we viewed Ah Lu's remains, we were surprised to note the great gold chain about the girl's neck, the hateful spider resting upon her breast. The Inspector merely shrugged, but I was fascinated, for the ruby eyes seemed fairly to blaze hate. Following the ceremony, the coffin was sealed in a metal casket. I wondered if old Fung believed the gold tarantula would be of service in warding off any devils Ah Lu might encounter while crossing the black river on the back of the sacred green dragon.

After seeing the Chinese and the casket aboard a train, Church and I returned to the station. My chief expressed the reverse of confidence that the police would discover the murderer. "But Fung will be back," he said decisively, "and—he'll never give up until he's uncovered the killer and sent him before the Seven Celestial Judges for punishment."

SEVERAL days dragged by, and not one of the force on duty in the quarter discovered anything to lessen the mystery surrounding the killing of the beautiful Chinese girl. The cunning of the guilty Chinese in covering their trails finally got on my nerves and made me surly. At length I began working alone, hoping persistence and concentration would uncover some helpful clue. I made no forward step. But I did see and study Po-Yang when he came to the station to thank Church for giving him refuge on the night of the tragedy. Our guess was, he wanted to learn if he was under suspicion. We blocked this by asking no questions.

Then came a night when, for no particular reason, I got a hunch that I should remain in the quarter throughout the night. I always yielded to such impulses. Nothing happened. About three in the morning I decided to go home. In accordance with my custom, I made a final turn past Po-Yang's home, walking on the opposite side of the street. A glance showed the windows of his quarters were dark. I looked toward the front door; then swung about, fighting down a desire to cry out—this time with joy.

For, in the entryway, silhouetted by a queer light, was the phantom of Ah Lu, its arm raised as if beckoning me. No one was in sight and, believing it desired to lead me to something of importance, I hastened across the roadway. But the figure faded into the surrounding blackness as I approached.

Reaching the steps I looked close. A Chinese in blouse and pantaloons sat slumped in the doorway, his head bent upon his hands

which were crossed over his knees. I figured he was one of Po-Yang's gunman guards, so I backed into the shadows, and watched for fifteen minutes at least. The man made no move. Certain the phantom had summoned me for a purpose, I decided to arouse and question him. Moving close, I touched his shoulder. He did not raise his head. A trifle angry, I pushed him rudely. He toppled sideways, and as his face turned upward so the light from a near-by electric shone upon his face and staring eyes, I realized that he was dead.

OPENING the door into the dimly lighted hallway, I dragged the body inside. Then, with an oath, I let it fall. For, driven into his heart, was a dagger, the handle of which was identical with the one which had killed Ah Lu. As I bent to study the man's features, I received a second and greater jolt. He wore native shoes, and there was an opening cut in the outer side of the right one. I staggered to my feet, numbed by a realization of the awful truth. The girl's ghost had killed the murderer—then piloted me to the corpse. The mystery of the missing daggers was explained.

While I was pulling myself together, several Chinese came down the stairway and pressed close, chattering. I wondered how they had learned something was amiss. Showing my badge, I questioned them. They explained they were Po-Yang's guards, but that he was away. All denied they knew the dead man, even after I had searched him and uncovered a loaded revolver. Finally I sent one for the officer on post, and he summoned Church and an ambulance. We did no talking until we were at the station. Then I told my story—omitting the phantom.

Because of the dagger used, the Inspector knew the murder was associated with the killing of Ah Lu. But the police investigation revealed only that the dead man was Jim Soey, a cashier at one of the gambling dens Po-Yang was believed to operate. And I did not contradict Church when he suggested that Fung had guessed the murderer's identity, probably had hidden the daggers from the police, but had ordered his agents to use them in obtaining vengeance after he had left the city.

Later, when we went to question Po-Yang, we learned definitely he had gone away, probably immediately following a report that his gunman had been slain. Nearly a week thereafter, Fung returned, sent for me and announced that he had fulfilled his mission to the coast, that in his absence his agents had learned nothing which would help the police, but that he and they would continue their efforts. He said he had no opinion concerning the murder of Jim Soey, and could not understand how the killer had procured one of Ah Lu's daggers.

After that came two full months of quiet for me and for the police on duty in the quarter. There were no murders; no shootings, except by dope-crazed whites.

Finally the end of my third month in Chinatown came, and I was almost convinced that Church and Clancy had been correct when they told me the killings of Ah Lu and Jim Soey would pass unsolved into the limbo of the quarter's things forgotten. And I had lost my dread of the specter again appearing when I heard a bit of news which put me on my feet again. The tip came from Mrs. Remsen. Po-Yang was back in the quarter, but she had been unable to discover his hideout. I informed Church and he ordered me to work the tip alone, as I'd been the only one who had turned in any real information on the case.

By that time I had cultivated the acquaintance of several stool pigeons—all opium users—and I offered sufficient coin for a full week of purple poppy dreams to these for information as to the whereabouts of the elusive Chinese. All failed, however, though two confirmed Mrs. Remsen's tip. I don't know exactly what I would have done had I learned his hiding place. To arrest him and give him the third degree concerning Jim Soey would have gained little; probably only an admission that he had employed him as a guard. I guess what actuated me was an unshakable hunch that if I could locate and watch him, some day something would develop—though heaven knows what—which would make him betray himself.

ONE night, about a week after I'd been informed of Po-Yang's return, I found myself walking the streets of the quarter through just such a mixture of drizzle and fog as had obtained the night when Ah Lu was killed. More than once I wished heartily for Clancy's companionship, for an ever increasing sense of dread seemed to oppress me for no reason and, with my fingers gripping the gun in my coat pocket, I frequently paused in the shadows and looked about to note if I were being trailed. However, nothing happened as the hours dragged. A

hot meal about one o'clock restored some of my nerve.

Leaving the restaurant, I found the fog had thickened so the few persons I passed appeared unreal and far away. Moving along slowly, I turned into twisting Doyers Street, encountering nobody there. That is —until I had almost reached the Mission. Then, with a suddenness which sent me reeling against a wall with a frightened gasp, the phantom of Ah Lu appeared. I could see her plainly, note her features and—what was more amazing—saw that about her neck was the gold chain with the accursed red-eyed spider, the chain which I last had seen upon the body of the real Ah Lu, when she was sealed in her metal coffin.

I must have lost consciousness for a moment or two—or at least been too unnerved to observe—for the next I knew I was trudging along behind the apparition which moved as though propelled by an unfelt breeze. On, on, a block, maybe; perhaps two. Then my phantom guide led me into a darkened hallway, up flights of stairs and into a vacant room on the tenement's top floor. The specter beckoned me to a window, then pointed to another window across a narrow courtyard. I looked. In the room facing me, a room brilliantly lighted, reclined the elusive Po-Yang; asleep on a couch with no guard in sight. No question as to his identity; I could see his features plainly.

I glanced about for the phantom of Ah Lu. It was gone. Again I looked from the window—then gave a cry. The specter was in the room opposite, standing over the sleeping man. It bent and touched him. Po-Yang awakened with a start. Then his face contorted into awful fear and he rolled from his cot and to the wall, where he crouched, watching his ghostly visitor with fear-crazed eyes.

Slowly the apparition took the chain from its neck, the hateful spider dangling. The cringing wretch saw and understood. He beat frantically with his hands to ward off the glittering insect. But it moved downward, steadily, slowly, finally touching his upturned face. The next instant, the doomed man leaped to his feet, staggered, struck out wildly at his tormentor—then spun upon his toes and sprawled, inert.

It was long after sun-up when I regained consciousness. Then thoughts of the awful killing I had witnessed—I was satisfied it had been no dream—came to me. But considerable more time elapsed before I could summon sufficient nerve to go next door and investigate. When I reached the flat I sought, I found the door locked. But by getting upon a fire-escape from the hallway, I was able to reach the window, force the catch and make my way inside. In the bedroom in which I had witnessed the tragedy, I found Po-Yang stiff in death, his features horribly contorted and with that accursed golden spider's legs fixed in his cheek.

The sight of it sent me into a frenzy. I knocked it to the floor with the butt of my revolver, then hammered it into a shapeless mass. Next, I picked it up with a paper and tossed it into a stove in which a fire still smouldered. It was not until then that I began to think. I was certain I had seen the tarantula sealed in Ah Lu's casket. And yet—the night before—her phantom had worn it—it had stung Po-Yang to death—and I——

Cursing, vowing that thereafter I would have nothing more to do with the cases beginning with the murder of the Chinese girl, I made my way out as I had come and hurried to the station. On the way I doped a story to tell the Inspector—that a stool pigeon I never had seen before had tipped me to Po-Yang's hideout and, going there and receiving no reply to my knocks, I had gotten in by the fire-escape only to find him dead. I was obviously so unnerved after telling my story that Church sent me home.

When I appeared for duty again next day, he told me the Medical Examiner had reported Po-Yang had died from an injection of a violent poison which he had been unable to name. His suggestion was, that it had been shot into the man's face with a poison-dart; but the police had been unable to locate anything of the kind.

THAT'S about all of the story; except that Fung-Sung-Lo attended Po-Yang's funeral with me and viewed the body. I wondered just how much of the truth he knew, or guessed. But he made no comment, then or thereafter.

If you desire more facts, possibly you can obtain them from Chung-Lee-Low; if he's still alive, hasn't lost his memory and—will talk. I don't know where he'd be now. But in my time in the quarter he used to sell incense-sticks in the phony joss house at Number 20 Mott Street, maintained for white sightseers. He and old Fung-Sung-Lo were the closest of friends and it's certain Chung-Lee-Low knew the truth, every last detail of it.

The Magic

By

ERIC P. WARNDOF

On January 19, 1928, a New York newspaper published the following item:

SKELETON AT CHESS

Find Grim Remains Before Unfinished Game in Cabin

Hollywood, Jan. 19, (N.P.)—Members of the Pathé-Bray Colorado River expedition have uncovered what they believe to be a murder of the early gold mining days in Arizona.

They found a skeleton seated before an unfinished chess game, in an adobe cabin, twenty miles below Lee's Ferry, Ariz. The murder theory was advanced because the chess game was unfinished and a chair, in which the other player apparently sat, was pushed back as though someone had left in a hurry.

NOBODY paid much attention to this news report, not even the police. But there was one man strangely fascinated by the weird story: my friend F. Spitzberger, the Viennese occultist, living his strange and secluded life in the midst of the turmoil which is Manhattan. When I showed him the report, his eyes lit with that mysterious gleam which I find in them whenever something queer, something beyond mere human ken comes to his attention. He thanked me and, rather hurriedly, asked me to go, after he had carefully put away the newspaper clipping.

And a few days later the mail brought me what I set down here without further comment. Whence this information came to Herr Spitzberger I don't know. But I am sure that what he tells is the truth—strange and mysterious as it may seem. For time and again, he has proven to me that he possesses eyes which see further than normal eyes, and ears that understand words nobody else can hear.

And this is his story:

A NOVEMBER night in Venice. The streets drenched in rain; the heavens black with water. It rained incessantly, as if it were never to stop again. The lagoons and canals were so black that one did not know where the water began and where the rain stopped. Somewhere, a last lantern gleamed and flickered, and wet apparitions danced around it, in the guise of long, tattered bits of fog.

On one ramshackle house hung an old lantern, its light momentarily threatening to flicker out; from its roof the water ran as from a battered old umbrella. The dim light fell on a gondola which, suddenly, was there. Nobody had heard it come; it had appeared suddenly, unexpectedly, from nowhere. For a moment the *gondoliere* waited, then rapped on the roof of the *felze* to call his passenger.

Somebody kicked open the door to the little hut of the gondola, crawled out and, with a few quick strides, rushed through the downpour to the shelter of the door. But the door was closed. Cursing, the irate visi-

CHESSMEN

Lasco, the master player, had been assured he could lose to no man — but there was a sinister catch in this pledge

tor banged against it with hands and feet. The gondola rested motionless on the water; no quick rocking, no slap-slap of the waves against its sides, indicated its presence. And when a moment later the house-door was thrown open, almost sending the late visitor sprawling down the stairs before he could rush inside, the gondola was gone as quickly and as mysteriously as it had appeared.

The stranger walked through a narrow, dark alley leading into the house; but he saw nobody who might have opened the door so brutally and upon whom he could vent his wrath. With heavy, splashing steps he made his way towards the other end of the alley, where a dimmed ray of light coming through a crack in another heavy oaken door showed him his goal. He pushed the great door open with a powerful heave, tore the rain-soaked cape from his shoulders, and found himself standing in a low-ceiled, dark paneled room in an inn.

Men and women half leaned, half sat in front of wine-spattered tables, drinking and smoking.

The heavy air was thick with the swirls of gray smoke and the greasy smells from an adjoining kitchen. Legs dangled loosely from across the arms of huge chairs, heads were buried in arms leaning on the massive tables. But nobody said a word, nobody made a sound. In this dingy room, life itself seemed to pause.

Raffaele Lasco, the newcomer, made for a corner of the room, and sank onto a wooden bench, while an old hag with a tremendous hump on her back shuffled towards him across the room, placed a pitcher of wine on the table and, muttering, disappeared again.

LASCO drank, at first gulping the wine down greedily, then drinking more slowly; but when he put the pitcher back on the table, not a drop was left in it. Lasco buried his head in his folded arms, and groaned.

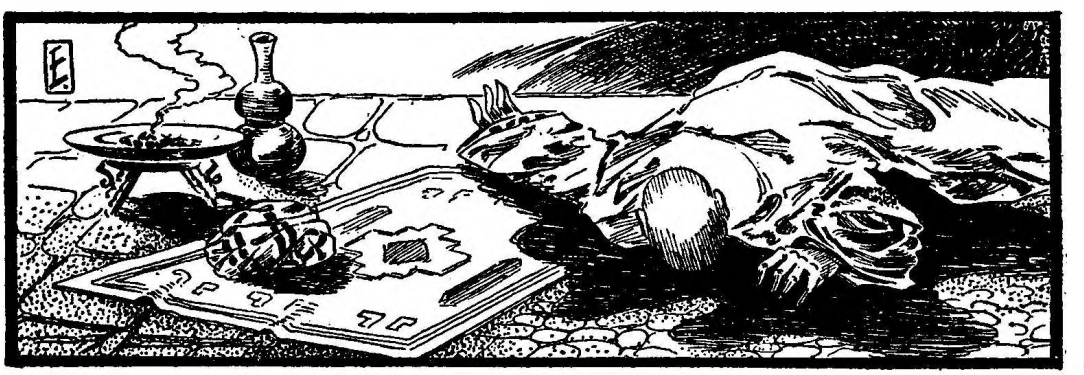
"Tonight I should like to play chess with him," somebody in a corner whispered.

"Why?" his neighbor answered in an equally low voice. "To lose?"

"Tonight one could defeat him!" the first one responded.

"Never, you fool! Not as long as these hellish chess figures are his." The persons around the two nodded their heads and whispered their assent.

Raffaele Lasco was the most famous chess player in Venice. At that time international chess matches were as yet unknown, and the best player of a given city was considered the best player in the world. Lasco in particular was believed invincible, because the chessmen he always used—so the public thought—came from the devil. Some claimed that he had pledged his soul to Satan in return for the pieces; others believed that



he had robbed and killed the former owner on one of his travels in Asia.

The chessboard itself was beautifully inlaid with ivory and ebony, surrounded by a mysterious floral design. The chessmen were figures with human or animals' heads; the castles were elephants, their trunks raised; the knights were beautifully carved horses from the steppes of Asia. The bishops were spindle-legged human figures with cats' heads. The king was a gargoyle; the queen, in rich array, wore a skull; while the pawns were nude human figures in cramped positions, with the heads of birds and dogs and fishes.

Nobody had ever been able to win a game from Lasco as long as he used his own chessmen—and he always used them. The hunchbacked old innkeeper kept them for him and, for years, he had never played anywhere else. Some of his adversaries claimed that during the game the figures became alive and upset his opponents by their weird movements, and their terrible grimacing, so that they always lost; others again claimed that all this was stuff and nonsense, and that Lasco was simply the best player alive.

ONLY once had Lasco lost a game; that was when he was brought before the Inquisition accused of witchcraft, and when the chief judge, himself an ardent chess player, before pronouncing sentence had challenged him to a game. Then Lasco lost—and won his life.

Playing chess was Lasco's only source of income. He invariably played for stakes, which could be as high as anyone desired. But as time went on he found fewer and fewer people willing to stake their ability against his. And so he became poorer and poorer, and lived at the inn, although nobody ever saw him pay his reckoning there. He never talked about his chessmen. He never answered a question about them, never—until a woman made him talk. She was Anita, the niece of the innkeeper, who had come from the country to Venice only a few weeks before. Lasco fell madly in love with her the moment he set eyes on her; and to the surprise of the rest of her numerous suitors, he seemed to find favor with her.

Anita was tall for a woman. Slim and graceful, she bent like a whip before the onrush of his passion, and before a week passed she had become his sweetheart. She loved him dearly, and plead with him to start a new life, particularly to give up his chess playing. But he only shook his head. She entreated him, trying to win his confidence. In vain—until one day, when he said in a burst of confidence:

"No man can ever defeat me against my will, so long as I use these chessmen. And should I falter, it will be my last game."

NOISES were heard now from the lagoon. Torches flared through the narrow, grimy windows. Somebody knocked on the door. The alley leading to the guest room filled with gay young voices; and when the door was thrown open, a group of Venetian nobles in black half-masks burst into the room. The carelessness of youth lit the dingy place; laughter and shouts suddenly turned it into an abode for the living. Tables were moved, benches pushed aside for the newcomers. Candles were lit.

The entire group seemed to obey one leader, a handsome young blade with shining dark eyes whose wit sparkled, and whose gaiety outshone the others. With his melodious voice he invited everybody present to share their wine, asking their pardon at the same time for not lifting their masks. In an instant, the room seemed filled with one family; everybody shouted and sang, drank and shouted again. Only Lasco remained silent and gloomy in his corner. When the nobles entered the room and the candles had been lighted, he had looked up for a moment, and dubiously fastened his glance for a moment on the leader; but he buried his head again in his arms, remaining silent and sulky.

"Why do you despise our wine?" the young leader asked him. "Or, do you like our wine, but shun our company?"

Lasco refused to stir.

"Who is this killjoy?" the youth asked again.

Half a dozen voices shouted:

"Lasco, the chess player."

The youth jumped up.

"Lasco? Lasco? Do I find you at last? Would you like to play with me?" he demanded, agreeably surprised.

Lasco raised his head and laughed derisively.

"What will you play for?" he asked.

Quick as a flash, the youth answered: "For my entire fortune if you want, and that is not little. But what is your stake?"

"My head, if you want it," Lasco replied.

"That is not enough," the stranger laughed. "But—your chessmen against my

fortune. Are you willing to risk so much?"

Slowly Lasco rose. His long black hair fell over his haggard shoulders. Fire burned in his eyes, his features tightened and he seemed younger, fresher, more proud. Across the table from him stood the youth, slim and well kept, looking up to Lasco as if in admiration. The entire inn was in an uproar. His friends bore down on the strange youth, entreating him to give up his mad attempt to conquer the unconquerable. But he refused to listen. In fact, it seemed as if he did not even hear their words. He shook them off, fascinated by his adversary.

While the others still chattered wildly, gesticulating excitedly, the hunchbacked old hag brought Lasco's enchanted chessmen, and placed board and bag on the table. Then she went from one to the other of the loungers, whispering something in their ears. Some shrugged their shoulders; others protested; but in the end all of them seemed to agree with what the old woman had said, and while Lasco and the stranger stood still facing each other, they sneaked away.

THE group of newcomers, too, seemed suddenly listless and sad. A few moments later, the challenger turned to them and said:

"Whoever loves me will leave me, alone, with Lasco."

Again they protested and warned; but he insisted upon being left alone, and one after the other they reluctantly disappeared.

Lasco remained with his challenger. Only the old woman kept them company. They drew for sides. White was the stranger's color. One by one, he took the chessmen from their bag, looking carefully at each of them, smiling at some, shaking his head over the weird shapes of others. The queen with her white skull seemed to interest him particularly, and he stared down upon her for a long while before he finally placed her on the white field.

The game began. The youth played carefully, thinking over each move, although not inordinately long about it. The game seemed easier for him than for Lasco, who hesitated before making a new move. The game was turning against him. He rested his head on one hand, while with the other one he tugged nervously at his hair. Every now and then, he looked up and stared at his opponent as if he were trying to make him out, as if to pierce behind the black mask and discover the youth's identity.

The youth had made a move and was leaning back in his chair. Lasco lost himself in deep thoughts and, after a long while, moved a piece. Then he sat straight up and mockingly stared at the other. The youth looked at the board. Without a moment's hesitation, he made his counter move. Astonished, Lasco contemplated its effect. The derisive smile faded from his lips; he leaned over, studied the position carefully; suddenly, a look of terror intermingled with surprise appeared on his features. Then he rose, leaning heavily on his hands, and hatefully, terror stricken, madly looked into the sparkling eyes of his conqueror.

"YOU spoke the truth, Lasco," the youth said in a friendly tone. "No man can win a game while you are playing with these pieces. No man—but a woman!" and with a quick gesture he tore the black half-mask from his face. Opposite Lasco sat—Anita!

With a wild shriek of anger Lasco hurled himself at her. The table toppled over, the chessmen rolled to the floor. Under the weight of their two bodies, Anita's chair crumpled and now he pinioned her, his clawing hands crushing her throat. Anita had no chance to make a move of defense. All of a sudden it was deadly quiet in the room. Then an ugly snicker came from over near the open hearth. Lasco looked up to the chair where, until a moment ago, the old hag had sat. She was gone. In her stead he saw a little old man, wrinkled, squatting on his crossed legs. On his head he wore the high cap of the Javanese priests and his garb was one of their robes. Everything on him seemed to be covered with sheer gold, but through the gold Lasco could see the dim outlines of the chair whereon the wicked figure sat. The priest stretched out a bony, trembling hand and, pointing at the lifeless form of Anita, an expression of undying hatred on his face, he croaked: "She will avenge me!" The next instant, he had disappeared.

With a howl of terror, Lasco bent over Anita, lifted her from the floor, pressed her to his heart, kissed her, caressed her, sobbing wildly. It was too late. She was dead.

Somebody knocked at the door. Lasco regained his senses. Hurriedly he collected his chessmen from the four corners of the room, putting them in his leather bag, listening again. The knocking became louder and louder. Stealthily, Lasco sneaked to one of the windows, opened it and dived into

the lagoon, swimming away into the dark.

A four-masted schooner on her way from Venice to Boston carried a mysterious passenger. Like one broken to little pieces by fate, he squatted around in corners and under windlasses; or else he lay in his hammock for days without stirring, without even partaking of the humble repast of hard bread and salted beef with tea, the fare of the few passengers as well as the crew. He spoke to no one; no one ever attempted speaking to him a second time. He always carried with him a little old leather bag, stuffed with what might have been pebbles, but which were, in fact, chessmen. He was Raffaele Lasco, the Venetian.

How he had got aboard this vessel, he had forgotten. Somehow or other, the old witch of an innkeeper had helped him, had practically pushed him on board to save his head from the gallows. Eternally he heard her hissing voice: "Quick, quick, before they torture you."

The only definite thought he had in his mind all these many days was, that he had murdered his sweetheart. And again and again he repeated to himself: "Yes, I have killed her. But not with my hands. When the chair fell over, she broke her neck. I did not kill her with my hands." And then he would look at his hands, rub them against each other, wipe them on his clothes. And again and again he would puzzle his mind, wondering how it could have happened that he, he, the greatest chess player in Venice, could have lost a game against a mere woman.

AT times, when he was sure that nobody could watch him, he would take a chessman from the bag. Oh, yes, he knew well the secret of these figures—he, and nobody else in the world! They were the devil's, they were bewitched. Had that charm turned on him? He stared at the pawns and they grinned back; he looked at the knights and it was as if they wanted to jump at his face. The elephant-castles seemed to spout at him and the gargoyle-king looked wise and mocking. Nothing was changed in them. But when he took the white queen, he dropped her in terror. Could it be? Was there a striking resemblance between her ivory skull and the face of his beloved Anita, the Anita he had murdered? Murdered——?! No, he had not murdered her; his hands were clean, they bore no stain of blood! Hastily he picked up the queen, and with shaking fingers put her back in the bag.

But that night he dreamed of the queen; and, strangely enough, she seemed to be both the old witch and Anita at the same time while she was standing ominously, fully life-size by his bed. And in his dream he shrieked so loudly that the next day the captain bade him remove his hammock to a secluded corner of the lower deck so as not to disturb the other passengers. Then he remembered that he had seen the witch talking to the captain.

THE journey was endless; more than nine weeks had passed before the sailor in the crow's nest sang out his "Land ho! So' South-east!"

One passenger had finally overcome Lasco's aversion to conversation and had even befriended him in a way. It was his intention to go as far West as possible, far away from civilized life, there to hunt and to till the soil. He asked Lasco to come with him. And Raffaele Lasco agreed.

After their debarkation, they journeyed, westward, aimlessly, for weeks. Two days after they had passed the last lonely settlement, an Englishman's ranch, they reached a country which pleased them, and where they decided to settle down. They built an adobe house, broke an acre or two of land, and devoted the rest of their time to hunting. The Indians with whom they came into contact were friendly. After a few weeks, a regular trade began to develop; fur was exchanged for gunpowder and salt, and before they realized it a certain friendship had sprung up between them and their neighbors, particularly with the young Englishman and his wife whose farm they had passed on the way to their location.

But in spite of these facts, Lasco was utterly lonely. He never talked of his past, nor did his friend; in other words, they both led a life which had a present and perhaps a future, but which completely lacked a past. Lasco had to square his accounts with Venice and the past as best he could. His chessmen lay buried in a corner of the adobe house, and he never so much as looked at them. But at regular intervals, he was tortured by dreams as vivid as anything he went through in his actual life. He saw everything that had happened, saw the old witch and Anita and the inn; and ever and anon, he saw the tiny Javanese priest in the background with the look of tremendous hatred on his shriveled features. But no tortures, no matter how horrifying

they may be, can stand the power of habit; and after some months the ghastly dreams seemed to have lost some of their horror.

ONE afternoon—Lasco's friend was absent on a hunting trip from which he was never to return—a stranger found his way to the house, sat with Lasco and ate and drank whatever was on the table, for in those days it was the universal custom born of necessity to offer any stranger the hospitality of any house he entered. The stranger seemed well informed about Lasco's trade, looked over the stores the two friends had amassed in an adjoining hut, and inquired into prices and quality. In the course of the evening, he explained that he was a buyer, showed Lasco a heavy buckskin pouch of gold and offered to purchase most of the stock.

Lasco liked the stranger and was pleased at the opportunity of clearing away his stock. They drank together, and talked. The stranger told of his wanderings in South America, Europe, and parts of Asia. He had been in Java, too; and when he mentioned that enchanted island, a green light gleamed in his eyes, a light which did not escape Lasco and which, vividly recalling the horror of his dreams, made him shudder. But in the next instant he shook it off, realizing that the mere mentioning of the name was the reason for his momentary terror.

Finally the stranger proposed playing some game to wind up the congenial evening, and asked whether Lasco had cards. So Lasco produced an old deck which had served him and his friend ever since they had left the ship together, and they started a game of poker. At first the stakes were small, but gradually they were raised. Lasco was losing and, like all losers, insisted upon raising the stakes higher and higher. His losses grew the more his nerves were shaken; he drank a great deal, until he suddenly realized that he had lost most of his trading stock. This realization sobered him up completely, and without hesitating he stopped the game.

"You have lost too much," the stranger said; "and I don't want to win everything. Why not play another game—perhaps you'll have better luck."

Lasco in the meantime had calculated his losses, and felt very depressed; but, experienced gambler that he was, he would not touch another card that night. He knew that he was playing in a run of bad luck.

"Perhaps you play chess?" the stranger asked.

It was the first time Lasco had heard the word chess since he had fled from Venice; and it was as if somebody had struck him on the head. For a moment he was dumb, unable to answer.

"I love to play chess," the stranger innocently proceeded. "I am probably like everyone who plays a fairly poor game, but still believes he knows something about it. Do you by any chance have chessmen?"

This question, Lasco realized, was not an unusual one, for it was the rule rather than the exception to find cards, chessmen and checkers in these lonely settlements where the solitude forced their owners to provide entertainment against the long nights. And yet he hesitated. Against his will the thought forced itself on him that he must murder the stranger and get his money. Lasco was not a murderer—even though, once upon a time—— He drove back this thought even before it came. To Lasco it seemed that a mocking smile played around the stranger's lips whenever the thought of murder came into his mind. Suddenly the chessmen stood before him in a vision; and for the first time since Venice he knew he was strong again, unconquerable, the master and owner of a set of pieces which made him invincible.

Without answering, he rose, went to a corner of the hut and, from beneath a litter of odds and ends, he produced the leather bag containing the chessmen.

"All right," he said, "let's play chess. But I warn you: if you are a poor player you are going to lose. I used to be quite a good hand at it."

"So much, the better for you," the stranger laughed. "Then you have a chance to make good your losses."

They sat down at the table and, one by one, took the pieces from the bag.

"What unusual men!" the stranger exclaimed, looking at each single figure for a long time before he set it on the board. In fact it seemed as if he were caressing them, were loath to let them out of his hands.

"How did you get this strange set?" the stranger queried before they began their play.

"I won it from the former owner," Lasco answered gaily. Now he was light and free; he could not lose. His opponent seemed suddenly serious and thoughtful. Once again Lasco was in his own element; he felt young and strong and sure of himself. He

laughed and chatted and drank excitedly.

They filled their glasses and began the game. After the first few moves, Lasco realized that his adversary was a poor player who played a fast, rather unintelligent game. And he won easily. The stakes had not been high, and Lasco proposed to double them for the next game. The stranger accepted. This time he had the white pieces and started with a daring attack which only a very good player could end victoriously. Lasco knew the gambit forward and backward, and after a few minutes he had trapped his opponent into a position which practically meant the loss of the game. The stranger gave up. Lasco felt completely happy; by now, he had won back half of his poker losses. He stood up and, walking up and down the small room, he explained the mistakes the stranger had made like a benevolent champion lecturing his pupil. And time and again he offered drinks, and drank himself. Finally he said:

"But in spite of all these mistakes, I feel sure that you can play a much better game if you try a little harder. How about a third and last one?"

The stranger laughed and shook his head.

"All right then. What about odds? Suppose I offer you two to one!"

Lasco's unknown guest sat in his chair, rocking to and fro, and thoughtfully blowing the smoke from his pipe toward the ceiling.

"You can't lose anything," Lasco insisted. "Either you win back whatever you have lost in the first two games, or else you lose your poker winnings. In other words, if the worst comes to the worst for you, you simply wind up the evening without winning anything."

THE stranger sat up, put both of his hands in his trousers' pockets and stared smilingly, but in a strangely, almost ominously penetrating manner, at Lasco. "Very well," he said.

Lasco had been sitting on the elbow rest of his chair; now he swung his legs in a semicircle over the table and fell into the seat. He was not a bit excited; rather he was keyed up. Eagerly he set his own and the pieces of his guest on the board. The black queen with the white skull was the last. For a moment he held it in his hand, looking at it derisively; then he put it down with a bang.

"You'd better set her in place yourself," he said. "It's always bad luck if you permit your opponent to move the queen for you."

The stranger took the queen, holding it upright on the palm of his outstretched hand.

"I love this young queen," he said mysteriously. "I love her pale face with its slick black hair."

Lasco stared at him aghast. What did he mean? This figure had a white skull, not a face, and no hair! Slick and black had been the hair of Anita, the Venetian girl. Why did he think of her again?

"What voluptuous lips!" the stranger proceeded. "Did this carver from far-away Asia want to depict a queen who was also a queen at kissing?"

With a painful effort, Lasco forced himself to enter into the spirit of his guest's remarks.

"Perhaps," he said. "Perhaps—or else, in order to make her loss doubly painful. So you'd better protect her well. And," he added after a pause, "in her honor I am going to play the dangerous queen's gambit."

EVERYTHING was in readiness. But holding his fingers on the first man he was about to move, Lasco hesitated another second and said:

"But please play this last game a little more carefully. I know you can do it, if you want to."

"I think you are right—I can play a better game, only I hesitate to do it," he said.

"Why?" Lasco asked.

"I need time to think over my moves; I haven't enough practice to play a fast game. And most chess players take it amiss if you think too long before moving."

"Think as long as you want, as long as it is necessary for you to play a good game," Lasco laughed. "Don't consider me at all. I'll sit here until doomsday if you want me to."

The stranger jumped up. "I'll take your word for that," he said, taking Lasco's hand and shaking it.

As he had announced, Lasco opened with the queen's gambit. The stranger declined to accept it, choosing the safe way in doing so. The two played slowly. In spite of the fact that he knew every move and counter move by heart, Lasco pondered over each single one. The stranger limited himself to a purely defensive game, evading every possibility for counter attacks. He surrounded his queen and the king with their warriors, as if with a stone wall. He thought for a long time before each move,

much longer than Lasco did. It was a serious game, and the two opponents seemed resolved to do their utmost to win.

HOURS passed. Night fell. The lamp had gone out for lack of fuel; they played on by the light of candles Lasco had brought from his locker. A careless move of Lasco's had changed his opponent's defensive position into an attack. Lasco realized the danger in a flash. But in the next instant, he remembered that his were magic chessmen and whoever owned them could not lose. It was as if a heavy load fell from his chest. Yes, indeed, he had murdered to own these chessmen!

That had been in Java where he had played with an old priest, and had lost and lost. How the thought that the priest was playing with a set of magic chessmen had come into his head, he did not know. He simply knew it. Later, much later, he seemed to remember that a voice had whispered it into his ear from behind, and that when he turned he had seen standing at his elbow a skeleton-like creature with tremendous eyes in a tremendous head. He had pointed to the chessmen who suddenly seemed alive, nodding their heads rhythmically. He had jumped up—and then the old priest was lying on the stone floor, his skull crushed under a terrific blow. Lasco had torn the priest's habit from the corpse and had wrapped the chessmen in it.

Thereafter he had been invincible. On the ship which carried him back to Venice he had played a few times against a very strong player who, after a dozen lost games, had said Lasco was like the famous Javanese priest who could never be conquered as long as he owned his magic chessmen. And careful investigation had proven that the set of figures had never failed their owner—never, providing he did not play against a woman. Lasco had done that only once; and now his opponent was—Lasco looked up. He could not finish his thought. Opposite him sat Anita, his murdered sweetheart! Not dressed as a man, as once before, nor in the Venetian garb he knew. She now wore the precious robe of his black queen, a skull instead of her face, and yet—her face! Lasco made an immense effort to collect his thoughts, in vain. They refused to obey. Who sat there, on the other side of the table? Anita? His guest? His queen? He looked down on the board: there he saw his opponent's queen, her neck broken!

"It's your move," he heard the stranger croak. "It has been your move for the last day."

He raised his head with a terrific effort and looked at his partner: once more it was the stranger who had won his money at poker.

How long had they been playing? Two or three times, Lasco had been on the point of getting up and walking about for a moment as he was accustomed to do after finishing a particularly difficult move. But every time a look from the stranger had frozen him into his chair. A terrifying thought crept into his head. He was chained by his promise: "I'll sit here until doomsday if you want me to." What did the stranger mean when he said: "It has been your move for the last day?" How long had they been playing?

Dim light came through the window shutters. Was it dawn or dusk? Had he been asleep? Was he dreaming?

HE was unbearably tired, his limbs ached, the blood hammered against his temples. He probably had been asleep, had awakened, and must now finish his game. He stared at the board and gradually realized his position. Every single figure was still in the game, and the men of his opponent had closed in on him as if to crush him. Yet nothing had been decided, no sign of immediate danger was to be found anywhere. He saw his own move, the one his guest's last one required. He had to do it. And yet he hesitated, desired to play safe, wanted to convince himself that his partner had not laid a trap for him. Slowly, deliberately, cautiously he thought, and wanted to raise his arm to move. But his arm refused to obey the command of his will, so heavily it lay on the arm rest. He wanted to shout, but his voice had gone.

Again he felt the terrifying shock he had experienced some time before when he had seen Anita sitting opposite him; he realized that this terror had paralyzed him. He was doomed to sit here to die, to hold this position as in a death chair until—doomsday.

IT had grown dark again, but the chessmen were still visible; they seemed to cast shadows from a light which came from behind Lasco's opponent. Slowly he raised his eyes. And then it seemed to him that the chair had been pushed back a bit, and that his guest had drawn up his legs, that he squatted on them like the figure of an old

Buddha. His gaze slowly crawled upward; he recognized the robe of an Asiatic priest, saw the shriveled face, saw looking at him in unspeakable hatred the eyes of the murdered Javanese priest.

Lasco tried to close his own eyes, and realized that he had lost even the power to do that. He tortured himself to evade the icy, malevolent eyes of the priest—and knew at the same time that he could not, that he would have to die in that position. And then—what time passed he did not know—he felt his heart beat more slowly; had the sensation of limitless terror, and yet at the same time expected delivery—death!

But he was still alive; he understood everything, saw everything with torturing clarity; all his senses were still awake, only his body seemed asleep forever. Suddenly he felt his upper body swaying, realized that he had been sitting stiffly upright, and fell back with a thud against the back of his chair. The priest never ceased watching him with those piercing eyes. Finally he stood up, took a bag from a pocket hidden in his robe and put the chessmen into it, one by one, slowly, enjoying his task to the utmost. Carefully he took them off the board, as if they were made of glass; some of them he caressed in his fingers for a long time, gazing lovingly at them as a youth gazes at the picture of his beloved. His lips moved as if in prayer—thin, hard lips one would have thought incapable of softening.

The last piece was still on the table; it was the black queen with the white skull. Three times the priest bowed deeply before her. When he rose the third time, the queen had disappeared.

Slowly, ceremoniously the priest turned, went towards the door and, as if in a religious rite, opened it and walked out without ever looking at Lasco again.

Desperately, Lasco tried to rise, to cry out. He saw the door close, heard the stealthy steps of the priest outside the door dying away in the darkness, saw the chess board where chessmen stood in exactly the same position as the magic ones had stood before, only this time they were ordinary, everyday chessmen. Then the opposite chair seemed to rise on its rear legs, rise and topple over——

Between the fallen chair and the chessboard stood Anita, Lasco's sweetheart, the black queen of the chessmen—motionless, staring down at him with dead, dreary eyes.

"She is holding the vigil," Lasco thought, "holding it while I am still alive."

THE next morning, the riderless horse of Lasco's friend came galloping toward their shack, and fled again as if the devil incarnate were astride it. Its rider never returned. He had been crushed to death when he had fallen headlong into a canyon.

In the chair sat Lasco, dying. And there, first his body, and then his skeleton sat through the years until it was found on January 18, 1928—an unfinished game of chess still on the table in front of it.

Mirrors Frighten Away Ghosts

ACCORDING to those versed in ghost lore and ghost habits, the only thing which a phantom fears—and which will send it scurrying for cover in the blackest darkness—is its reflection in a mirror. A case illustrating this point came to light recently in a little hamlet a few miles outside of Philadelphia.

In the village was a large, roomy but very old house, in which Daniel Morrow had lived the life of a recluse for many years. He seldom left it, made no friends among his neighbors and permitted no one to enter his home. Following his death a few months back, relatives sold the place and it passed into the hands of a man who decided to demolish it and erect a hotel on the site.

When the wreckers began work upon the place, they were amazed to discover that the four walls of the bedroom formerly occupied by the old man consisted of mirrors, so that everything in the room would be reflected many times. Recalling the story that ghosts feared their reflection, the new owner made many inquiries, finally learning that years previous Morrow had been in partnership with a man who had committed suicide after the two had engaged in a bitter business quarrel. Soon after the tragedy, he sold his business and took up his lonely residence in the old house.

The natural belief was that the old man, fearing the specter of his partner would return to make trouble for him, constructed the mirror-lined room and spent all his hours there after dark, for self-protection.

How a Reporter Interviewed a Ghost

Barone, the gunman, believed that one good turn deserved another. He made good—from the world beyond

By
LEON N. HATFIELD

A True Ghost Experience

IT was the kind of night that causes the boys in the *Gazette* office to say to one another with finality: "Well, something is going to happen tonight."

As is usual on a night like that, the something happened quickly. A light showed on the telephone board at the city desk. The office boy answered it, pressed a button and said to the city editor: "Mr. Drummond, you're wanted on the telephone."

Drummond talked a moment, hung up the receiver and called myself and Morton Holmes to the desk.

"A car has gotten in the way of the Sunkist Special at Maywood," he said. "You fellows had better get out there and see what's up."

Maywood was a suburban town about five miles out.

Cursing under our breath, Holmes and I went out to the cab we knew would be waiting.

The sleet stung against our faces like heavy sand. I had experienced the same burn in dust storms in the western section of Kansas.

We got in the cab, gave the driver his instructions and settled back in the seat. Both of us lighted cigarettes.

The cab slipped in and out of traffic, its wheels sliding on the glassy pavement and seeming to travel as far sideways as forward. Other motor cars, struggling half blindly like our own, seemed predestined to rub fenders with ours. But somehow we got to the city limits without disaster, and with nothing but five miles of straight paved highway ahead of us we made good time.

At Maywood we found parts of a motor car scattered along the right-of-way east of the crossing, and a small crowd had gathered even in the blizzard. But there was no story. The driver of the car had stalled his engine on the tracks, at the summit of a steep grade. He had seen the train in time to get out of the car before the crash. That simplified our work to a perfunctory collecting of names and addresses.

We plunged again into the traffic puzzle. Three blocks from the office we stopped, abruptly. Holmes and I were thrown back in our seats and a gush of biting air poured into the car, bringing with it a baptism of sleet. One side of the cab had been torn away and in the swirling downfall we could

see the dark form of a large closed car backing away from us. The front bumper was dangling, but apparently that was the only damage suffered by the aggressor in the crash.

SEEING that the driver had no intention of stopping, Holmes and I got out of the cab and succeeded in obtaining the license number of the fleeing car, before it had become entirely concealed by the storm.

We took the number to the motor theft bureau at Police Headquarters, found to whom it had been issued and made a complaint. Two patrolmen were sent to bring in the driver. They found him three hours later, as he was preparing for bed, and brought him to the station. He was a young fellow, an Italian, and appeared quite nonchalant.

"Just wait until my brother comes down," he said, "and we'll pay the damages and fix things up."

"We're not in a humor to fix things," I told him. "You might have killed us."

"Well," he said, "I'm sorry, but I had a young lady in the car and I didn't want to get her mixed up in any trouble. Let's wait until my brother comes before we talk any more."

Less than thirty minutes later another young Italian, about four or five years older than the first, entered the station. He nodded to several patrolmen, who returned the greeting sourly.

He looked around the group and then addressed me. "Who was driving the car?" he asked.

"That man over there," I replied, pointing to our driver, "but I'm the complaining witness in this case. I've sworn a complaint against your brother for leaving the scene of an accident."

The little Italian called me aside.

"My name's Bobby Barone," he said, reaching for my hand. "We've got liability insurance that will cover everything, if you will just let him go. Of course, if you insist on pushing the charge, all you'll get will be revenge. That won't pay for the car."

He drew a policy from his pocket to convince me that the talk about insurance was real. Barone was a nervous little fellow, and the earnestness of his plea eventually impressed me as humorous. Finally, after discussing the matter with Holmes and the driver, I agreed that the charge be dropped.

When the patrolmen heard of the decision, they were ruffled. "That fellow"—they pointed to Bobby—"is a shoplifter. We've got his mug in the rogues' gallery. Why, he just finished a hitch in the State penitentiary last January."

"That's true, all right," Barone admitted, "but I'm going straight now. And besides the charge is against my brother, not me. You've never had him for anything before. The kid gets up at four o'clock every morning and works hard all day at the city market."

"YOU just run along," I told Barone. "We've made up our minds about this and the complaint is withdrawn. If the case isn't dismissed, there won't be any prosecuting witnesses."

Barone gripped my hand tightly. "Say," he almost whispered to me, "Bobby Barone isn't going to forget this. You are a mighty white guy. If you ever need any help of any kind, just call on me. I don't forget my friends—and anybody who does what you've done, is a friend of mine."

Back at the office, I forgot the episode, after telling a few of the boys of it. And not once did I think of Barone again until a night about two months later when I was sent to the Yellow Ribbon Cabaret, where there had been a shooting.

Despite the cold night, a crowd of not less than three hundred people, most of them in evening clothes, were huddled outside jabbering to one another and answering questions of other passers-by who stopped to crane their necks. But none of them could see anything. The cabaret was in a basement, and the only entrance was a flight of stairs going downward.

I elbowed my way through the crowd, showed my police identification card to the patrolman at the entrance and made my way into the smoke-filled room. It was in strange contrast to the Yellow Ribbon I knew. Usually there was music, laughter, the swish of dancers across the smooth floor. The brightness of the women's dresses and the atmosphere of pleasure-seeking tended to render the place softly colorful under the dozens of Chinese lanterns that swung from the ceiling. But tonight the lanterns cast odd shadows on the floor, and the only sounds in the place came from two detectives who were questioning a frightened negro bartender, and from emergency hospital surgeons who were working over a still form near the rear of the room. The effect was startlingly disquieting.

Walking to where the surgeons were at work over the wounded man, I bent forward, so that I might see his face. The man was Bobby Barone! A dark splotch showed on the front of his white shirt and in one hand he held his revolver, cocked and fully loaded. Quite evidently he had been shot without a chance to use his own weapon. He was breathing, but the pallor of death was on his face and I knew the end would come soon.

For several minutes then, I talked with the detectives, drawing from them what few details of the shooting they had been able to gather. They had not learned much—just that Barone had been shot and that the crowd had rushed in panic from the place. That the pleasure-seekers' exit had been hurried was proved by the coats and hats left hanging in the check-room.

IT was only about an hour until the final city edition of my paper was due to go to press, and in the meantime I had to gather some sort of a story better than the police could give me. I decided to question those outside who had been in the cabaret when the shooting occurred. It was just a chance. I knew that cabaret crowds seldom remember anything. It is more convenient to forget.

I almost had reached the door when I heard my name spoken. I turned about.

"Who called me?" I asked.

The detectives laughed. "Get on out—no one wants you," one of them replied.

The other inquired, "What have you been drinking?"

I started out again. And again my name was spoken! That time I was certain I had heard it! I had even recognized the voice! It was Barone! I had believed he was too far gone to recognize me. I hurried to his side and bent over him. His voice was very indistinct and I had to place my ear near his lips to catch his words.

"Just remember that Bobby Barone doesn't forget his friends," the dying man said. "Any time I can do anything for you, just let me know."

I waited for more, thinking what peculiar people Italians were, carrying their likes and dislikes to the grave with them and cherishing them so ardently. But nothing more was said. I felt Bobby's pulse. It was still. I called to one of the surgeons, who had moved a few feet away from Barone.

"He's dead," I said.

"Yes," the surgeon replied, looking at me in an odd way, "he died ten minutes ago."

Dead for ten minutes! I didn't believe it! The surgeon surely must have been mistaken! I had heard Barone speak and I was not fool enough to believe a dead man had spoken to me. I told myself that over and over. But for some reason, as I made my way to the crowd outside, I felt an uneasiness—a tingling along my spine.

I questioned person after person in the crowd. No one knew anything. It was surprising how many women in evening gowns were on their way home from the theater without a coat, and had just stopped by to see what the crowd was about! Others had their backs turned—or had been interested in a cocktail—or had been dancing and minding their own business.

DISCOURAGED, I was about to go to a telephone and report to the office that the story would have to be written from the police report, which had no detail and absolutely no color. Then—I felt myself being led from the crowd! I actually was being pulled! And as far as my eyes could tell me, there was nothing to do the pulling! I was frightened and attempted to resist. But the force that was drawing me from the crowd would stand for no resistance. It led me out gently, but firmly.

Six, eight, ten blocks I walked, always with the sense of that tugging something ahead of me, until I finally had arrived at the Collector's Cabaret. The orchestra was playing lively jazz and half a dozen scantily dressed girls were bending over men at tables in the room. Perhaps half a hundred persons were sipping beer or gulping highballs. I took a table next to three men and a woman, and ordered a beer.

The men were talking noisily and my ear caught the word "Barone" in their conversation. I listened intently.

"Yes," one of the men said, "Barone was pretty tight tonight. He came in here singing. He has a good tenor voice, you know. Some fellow, who didn't know him, took Bobby for a regular entertainer and asked him to sing. Bobby fell right in with the thing and sang two songs. But when the fellow offered Bobby a dollar tip, he got sore and threw the money in the man's face. Then Bobby decided he would shoot somebody, and we had a devil of a time keeping him from doing it. He always has to play with his gun when he's drunk."

Another man entered and sat down at the table with the three. The conversation

turned to another topic, of no interest to me.

Well, I at least had a little piece of background for my story. I tried to picture in my mind what had happened between the time Barone had left the Collector's and the time he had been killed in the Yellow Ribbon. Having formulated a line of action, I was just leaving the cabaret when the urging force started tugging at me again.

It seemed to be getting stronger. My coat sleeve bulged outward where it had hold, but I could see nothing! I could, however, feel a distinct presence. The sense of just being pulled by nothing at all was gone. I was less nervous. As I walked along, I could feel the force at my side, just as one can feel the nearness of a friend with whom he walks. But I could move my arms freely to either side without their encountering anything.

My second walk, also directed solely by my mysterious companion, was not so long as the first. It took me just three blocks away—to another cabaret—the Election Night.

I WENT in and took a table. The Thing with me, I was certain, took a chair opposite me. I distinctly saw the chair move several inches nearer the table.

The Election Night was open for the first night after the removal of a Government padlock that had been put on the door for violation of the prohibition law. In its more fortunate days the place had been known as a hang-out for underworld characters, but tonight there were few persons there. Word had not yet had time to get around.

I knew the bartender, who also was waiter, and spoke to him. He nodded and drew me a beer.

"Say," he said, as he set the mug down, "you should have been in here three hours ago. Barone—I don't know whether you know him or not, but you ought to—came in here and gummed up what business we did have tonight. The little cuss was tight and he threw his beer mug at me for no reason at all. Then he took out that confounded gun of his and shot into the ceiling. The gang started for the door, but he headed them off and lined them up in front of the bar. It's an old trick of his—that fake hold-up stuff. It's going to get him killed sometime.

"Well, we finally got him out of here, but he cussed around and said he was coming right back. That scared everybody stiff that didn't know him, and the whole crowd left."

The Thing was at my side again. I somehow realized it was my signal to leave. I paid the cashier and went out.

"Fake Hold-Up Costs Life"—that would be my story! Unless the other boys had a piece of luck, it would be an exclusive front-page story for my paper. The more I thought about it, the better I liked it. At least, it would be something new in a crime story. I thought about the story so much that I forgot my companion until the sight of a hearse reminded me that we—the Thing and I—were back at the Yellow Ribbon. I knew the coroner had arrived and was sending Barone's body to an undertaker. I wanted to ask the coroner a few questions and so I went inside.

As I entered, the Thing beside me spoke. It spoke in a normal tone—and the voice was Barone's—but I could tell from the intentness with which the undertaker's assistants went about their work that they did not hear!

"You've heard about everything there is to know," the voice said. "I'll tell you the rest. When I left the Election Night, I went over to Jimmy Howell's place and lined the boys up. Jimmy got sore about it and started gunning for me. He got me just as I stepped in the door here. I saw him, but couldn't get to my gun in time. He's going down to the police station in a few minutes and give himself up. Any time there's anything I can do for you, just let me know."

The undertaker's assistants carried out a long straw basket and placed it in the hearse. As the big automobile moved away I felt the presence leave me and I have not to this day encountered it again.

When I returned to the office, Drummond asked, "Well, what does it amount to?"

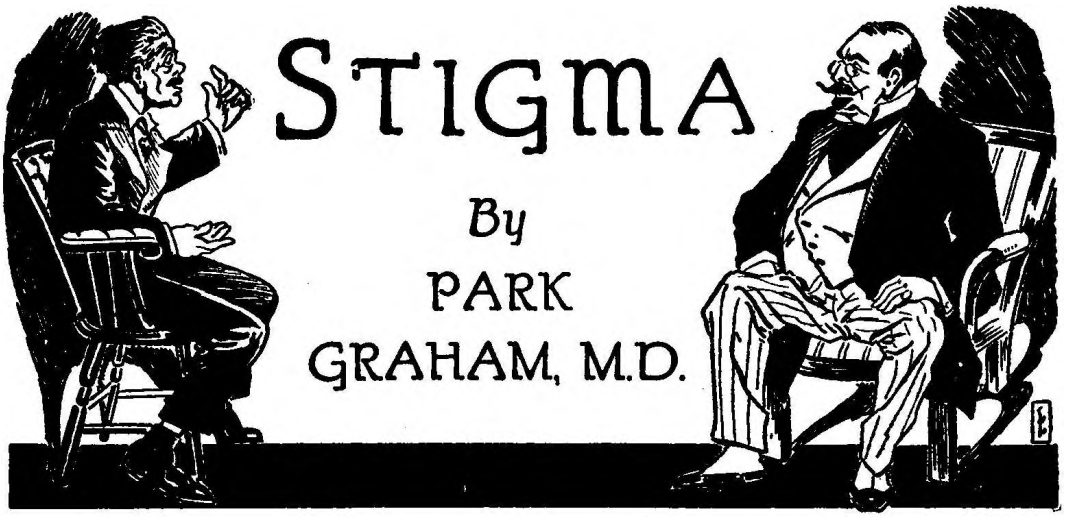
"Good yarn," I said.

"Hold it to fifteen hundred words," he instructed me, "and hurry. You've got just ten minutes to catch the city edition."

I wrote the story and waited about half an hour for a copy of the paper to read on the way home.

Just as the edition came up, Drummond said, "Say, Mulane phones in from Headquarters that Howell has just come in. He said the police had no hint Howell was the man. We're the only paper in town that's got the story for the city edition. How the devil did you find that out?"

"Oh, you'd be surprised!" I told him.



STIGMA

By PARK GRAHAM, M.D.

As told to STUART PALMER

The man of mystery showed weird burns that came and went on his body. In dreadful fashion, the doctor learned the why of it

THE strangest thing in my long and varied career as a general practitioner happened in prosaic New York, not twelve blocks from where I still have my office.

At the time, I was just starting out in general practice, with a glittering new shingle and little else except a professional beard. Patients were few and far between in those days, and yet I was full of enthusiasm and confidence in the all-powerfulness of science. I had a great deal of spare time, and I used to amuse myself by analyzing my patients and the few other people I met, and by guessing at their life stories from their appearance. But never in all my idle wondering did I dream of as grotesque a series of happenings as the weird incidents that involved Andrew Clyde.

I looked up, one morning early, to see him sitting in my outer office, twitching so nervously that I thought him a drug addict, or "snowbird," as they call themselves. His face was drawn and haggard, though he must have been in his early thirties, and I noticed that his hair was slightly gray.

When I called him into my office, I discovered that his scalp and left foot were covered with the ugliest burns I had ever seen. Great blisters had formed, and then broken. While the wounds were fairly superficial, and not exactly dangerous to life, yet they must have been causing him excruciating pain. He sat sullenly in a chair and submitted to the examination without saying a word.

I saw that the burns must have been made within a few hours, since their edges had not yet begun to cicatrize, a stage which precedes healing. He refused to tell me any reason why he had not sooner sought medical treatment, or to explain how he had been burned. He seemed in a highly nervous state rather than in physical agony, though the burn on the side of his skull should have been enough to render him unconscious.

AFTER treating him with the usual oils and unguents, I bandaged him as carefully as I knew how. He did not wince, and, in fact, it seemed to me as if there were no sensitiveness at all in the affected regions. At first, I had imagined that the wounds might have been caused by the sulphuric acid used in etching counterfeit money plates, but the burns were of a non-acid type.

As he stood up to go, I began to warn him about the consequences of failing to take care of the wounds. He looked up at me despairingly—he was a short, rather slender man.

"Doctor, are these real burns? I'm too near crazy to know."

I told him that the burns were real enough to make it advisable for him to go to a hospital, or at least to remain in bed

for a few days. His question mystified me.

"But Doctor," he said, with his high voice breaking, "you don't understand. They come every night—when I'm asleep!"

He started for the door, with his flabby face contorted with either fear or hatred. I called him to stop, and gave him a sedative.

"Your nerves are in terrible shape," I told him. "Whatever it was that burned you, has left you all wrought up. Now, you know that you were not burned in your sleep. Sit here and tell me the whole story."

"Doctor, I tell you that this happens every night, about midnight. It's not so much the pain of the burns . . . they don't hurt very badly. But no matter how I chain and lock my door, I wake up about midnight with a horrible ringing in my ears and choking in my throat. And, every time, my head and foot are burned this way."

I decided that this man was in the throes of some remarkable form of hysteria, and wishing to observe him more closely, I offered to let him sleep on the cot in my consulting room. "I will be here late tonight anyway," I told him, "and whatever it is that's bothering you, will have both of us to contend with."

He agreed eagerly. The man seemed torn between the necessity of keeping a terrible secret and the desire to confide it to some other living person.

"But it's not you They're after, Doc." He leaned forward as if to tell me something of the greatest importance. "It's not you—it's me. And it'll happen here just the same. I know it will."

I MADE him promise to return that evening so that I could re-dress his wounds and see that he spent a calm night. I secretly intended to give him a powerful opiate that would keep him comfortably sleeping until the next morning.

By the time he returned in the evening, I had come to the conclusion that my patient was the victim of hallucinations and self-inflicted tortures. But as soon as I started to take off the bandages in order to care for the burns, I found to my horror that there was no sign of wound or scar on either head or foot!

At my cry of amazement, he looked full in my eyes and laughed—a fearful, despairing laugh that made my blood run cold.

"Now, do you believe me? Doctor, it's this way every time. I wake with the burns—they sting for a while and then disappear. Every night for five nights it's happened. I'm not crazy, but it's a wonder I'm not. Every night since——" He stopped, as if sorry he had said so much.

No matter how closely I examined the patient, there was no sign of any burn or scar on him. Yet this was unmistakably the same man I had treated early in the morning! I would have recognized his haggard face anywhere.

I threw myself in a chair opposite him and lit a pipe with trembling fingers. I was young then. But I have never been timid. Doctors learn to face this world and the next, without losing their equanimity. But this man and his wild story seemed to belong to neither.

He tossed off the sleeping potion that I had made ready for him, and lay down fully dressed on the cot, covering himself with his overcoat. He was not the sort with whom many men would sympathize. There was something of the cornered rat in his furtive, sneaky gestures. Yet stark, naked terror looked out of his pig-like eyes.

NONE of my books on hysteria, hypnosis, or dreams seemed to shed any light on the case of the man who called himself Andrew Clyde, and who was sleeping so noisily in the room next to me. Through the open door I could hear his regular breathing, and I wondered how he could sleep at all, even under the influence of the morphine I had given him.

The lights were low in both rooms, and I must have dozed in my chair, although I had determined to keep awake. I was suddenly brought to myself with a start. The lights flickered and went low for a moment, as if the current were cut off. Then the strong odor of burning flesh filled the room. I rushed to my patient. He was sleeping, but with his mouth open and groaning. Pulse and respiration were unbelievably high, and at the rear of his skull the skin and hair had been burned away as I had seen it that morning.

I feverishly unlaced his shoe, and examined his foot. As I had feared and half expected, the great broken blister was there, just the same. If anything, it was just a little more severe than before.

In such moments, when the mind wavers between the real and the impossible, between the sane and the insane, we cling to whatever firm, sure foundations are near us. I had my medical knowledge, and my instruments and medicines. Not daring yet to think, or to wonder what had happened, I

mechanically treated and bandaged his burns, and gave him another quieting hypodermic injection.

Then I staggered to the cabinet where I kept my dispensary, and hesitated between the bottle labeled "spir. frum." and the round can of cocaine. There are times when a doctor can almost be forgiven for taking to drugs, horrible as their effect is sure to be. But I drank copiously of the raw whisky, and went back to my patient. I was determined, now that I was sure he would not wake for some hours, to find out something about him in the hope of solving the mystery that surrounded him.

It was with difficulty that I went through his pockets, for he was a heavy man, and I was weak with a strange fear. But his steady breathing reassured me, and I found upon examination that his pulse and breathing were slowing down to normal. My search of his pockets, unprofessional as it was, did not add to my knowledge or to my peace of mind.

None of his clothes were marked in any way, and there were no letters or any sort of memoranda to be found. In one of his hip pockets was a roll of fairly large bills. They gleamed green and yellow by my study light. There was more money than a young doctor had ever seen before in his life. It was very evident that this Andrew Clyde did not lack for funds. And it was equally certain that he either had no use for banks or that he definitely belonged in that half-world of criminals who dare not use them.

THERE was also a pocket knife with a blade nearly four inches longer than that allowed by police edict, and a harmless-looking gun of the forbidden type capable of discharging a twenty-two cartridge with deadly short-range effect.

These things, together with some change and other odds and ends, made up the contents of his pockets. I replaced everything as it had been, and walked into the other room.

I had come to the conclusion that this Clyde must be a member of the criminal profession, and I wondered whether or not to turn him over to the police. But the police certainly could not understand his strange malady if I could not. There was the mystery of his terrible burns, which lasted a few hours, vanished and reappeared on schedule. I could not let him slip out into the whirlpool of New York's streets without learning the reason for what was happening to him. My own sanity depended upon finding a rational explanation for this thing. Apparently it was beyond science, God, or man. Yet I was consumed with the fierce need of knowing.

If I could explain this thing to my own satisfaction, I felt that I could go on with my work and with my life. But if it turned out to be a vagary of fate, there seemed no sense, no meaning in life.

All that night I sat in my armchair, puzzling over the grotesqueness of this case. Could it have been possible for the man to have inflicted the wounds on himself, for some unknown reason? But I had seen him in a drugged sleep. And one burn had appeared underneath his shoe!

I WONDERED for a moment if some unknown assailant had entered through the door of the office, or could have passed me while I lay asleep. My window opened out over a great building excavation, and it was four stories above the ground. There was no ledge above or below it, and not even an ape could have found a foothold on the outer wall. And the door to my office had been locked and bolted! If anyone had succeeded in getting past the night watchman at the outer door downstairs, he could not have found any way to enter my rooms.

But, for the moment admitting that natural means could have inflicted the wounds in some strange revenge or punishment, I was immediately confronted with the incredible fact that they seemed to have little or no effect on the burned man, and that within a few hours they had completely disappeared. If they had healed naturally, it would have taken three or four weeks for the cicatrix, or scar tissue, to form, and the mark would have remained until death.

Through this vicious circle my thought moved all night long. There seemed no scientific method in which to attack the problem. If the wounds were natural, why did they heal so magically and return so regularly? If they were not natural . . . but I had seen them, and smelled the odor of flesh. I could not believe my eyes, and I could not doubt them. I was young then, and I believed more firmly in the omnipotence of man's knowledge than I do now.

My patient awakened late in the forenoon, dizzy and weak. I gave him coffee, which is more of a stimulant than most people think, and he sat on the edge of the cot with his head in his hands. I waited,

hoping he would tell me more about himself and what had happened.

"Again, Doc! It always happens . . . every night. And it will . . . until Saturday——" He stopped, his teeth chattering with fear.

"Until Saturday?" I grasped him by the hand. "Come to, man, and tell me what this is all about. I can't do anything for you unless I know the whole story."

I thought for a moment that he was going to confide in me. But his weak mouth tightened and he set his jaw. "It's—it's my own business. They'll get me, or else I'll go crazy. Either way——" He shrugged his shoulders with a curious fatalism and rose to his feet.

"But you can't go out that way—something beastly vile is going on, and I've got to know what it is." At the time I didn't care particularly for the safety of my patient, but I had to know the reason for what had happened to him. Everything I had ever believed in was tottering. I stood in front of the door.

"Promise that you'll come back here this evening and stay," I said. "I've got to find out what it is." I had lost all my professional calm.

My patient looked at me strangely, with a twisted smile on his face. He shook his head, slowly. "You'll never find out—no one will ever find out. They'll get me—Saturday. There's nothing to do."

"But the police——"

"Police! What can the 'bulls' do against —the *dead?*" He whispered the last word, rolling his small, frightened eyes hideously. "Can they catch Nothing and put handcuffs on it? Who'll shoot at a spook? Nobody ever sees Them but me!" The man's superhuman nerve seemed to have been strained to its breaking point. I half expected to see him fall writhing on the floor, a subject for a strait-jacket. But he recovered himself, and sat shuddering on the cot.

I tried to reassure him, though I felt far from certain of anything myself. "Believe me," I said, "it is something quite natural that is after you. Maybe you have some strange enemy—or perhaps some malignant hypnotism is being practiced on you. Keep your head, man, and we'll try to find out what it is—and fight it." My words sounded hollow and meaningless as I said them, even to myself.

He shook his head, with a bitter twist of his mouth which might have been a smile.

"You don't understand, Doc. It's nothing you or any other man can fight. Maybe God can—if there is a God who cares what happens to me. I don't know. But I know well enough what's coming—Saturday night. I've only got these three days to live—three days——"

He pushed past me and dashed out of the office. I could hear him running down the stairs. Then there was silence.

THE rest of that week was a nightmare. I don't know how I went through my routine work. It's a wonder that I did not make some terrible mistake in treating my few patients. I walked around in a sort of daze. Every time the door of my office opened, I leaped to my feet, expecting and fearing to see the man with the burns. But he did not come, and I did not hear from him.

Try as I might, I could not conceive of a natural explanation for the wounds, and the strange way in which they came and disappeared. But his own idea of a supernatural cause, I refused to accept. At that time, as I have said, I firmly believed that man's knowledge was strong enough to solve man's mental and physical problems. Now —I am not so sure. There are strange happenings in this world of ours, and lives interlap with fierce loves and ambitions and hates that sometimes go beyond the grave itself.

It was evident that my strange client had a guilty conscience of some kind, and that he believed his wounds to be an unearthly punishment visited upon him. But what could a man have ever done to deserve the fearful doom of being burned to death by inches? What sin was foul enough to sear itself deep into a man's body and brain, bringing him a living Hell?

Two days passed, and I was unable to rest or sleep. Most of the time I spent walking the streets, trying to forget the experiences of the past few days, and yet hoping against hope that I might meet the man who called himself Andrew Clyde. Part of the hours I spent in medical libraries, hoping to find something which would answer the questions that tormented my brain. But there was nothing there.

On Saturday night something of the certainty with which Clyde had spoken of the doom that would fall on him Saturday at midnight must have imparted itself to me. I had a weird foreboding that there were fearful things about to happen, and that I

was fated to be involved, in some manner.

My offices oppressed me, and early in the evening I set out for a walk to clear my brain. It was a hot, muggy night. No breath of wind moved through the city streets and everything seemed held in a sweating tension, awaiting the rain. There was not a star in the sky, and low clouds were scudding, borne from the southwest.

IN the distance there was the low rumbling of thunder, growling like a great beast stalking the city. I walked for several hours, and then, fearing the coming rain, I hastened back toward my office. Just as the first drops splashed on the dusty sidewalks, I came in sight of the building. I noticed that there were lights in my windows, although I was sure that I had turned them out when I left.

Hurrying up the stairs, I opened the door of my outer office. There, in a chair, sat Andrew Clyde, his eyes staring and his face drawn with fright.

He leaped to his feet as I stood there. It was evident that he was in an unusually severe state of nervous excitement.

"Doctor, I picked the lock of your door. I had to come here. You must help me——"

His little eyes were shining behind tangled hair which, I noticed with a start, had turned snow-white since I had seen him last. There was no scar on the side of his skull.

"Tonight—tonight it'll happen. They'll get me tonight! Can't you stop them? Can't you do something? What are doctors for? Hide me somewhere——"

His pleading grew incoherent. I helped him to my armchair—he would not go near the cot where he had lain the other night—and offered him a hypodermic. He waved it away.

"Give me a drink, Doc. I want to die game."

I poured him a stiff drink of Scotch, which he swallowed at a gulp without blinking. The raw spirits seemed to make a new man of him, and he showed a marked, if artificial, improvement in voice and bearing. He pushed his hair out of his eyes, and sat up straighter in the chair.

"There's nothing I can do for you, Clyde—unless you'll tell me all you know about this thing. You're forcing me to work blindly. You know, or think you know, what it is that's troubling you." I was impatient with the man, for he had thrown his problem on me without giving me anything to go by.

He shrugged his shoulders. "My secrets are my own, and I've done too much talking already. I'll die without telling anything more."

I was intentionally cruel. "Then get up and go. You can't die here." I pointed to the door. "Either get out or explain what it is all about. I'd like to help you, but I can do nothing for you as things are now. Unless you take me into your confidence——"

He looked at me like a kicked dog, and terror shone in his eyes. "I have to stay, Doctor! I can't be alone—when—when it happens. Maybe I'll die. I might escape it. But that's not what I'm afraid of. I don't fear dying, for I've faced it every night for the last week. But I can't be alone. I don't dare to be alone."

"Then—sit down and tell me the story. It will never go any farther."

"I—I can't. And I don't dare to be alone tonight. If I'm alone, I'll kill myself to end the awful suspense, and then *They*'ll be waiting, worse than ever, on the other side. They'll be waiting there for me, and laughing——"

"Who are 'They'?"

"You wouldn't understand, Doctor. They're not in your world of patients and hospitals and books. They're—dead!" He screamed the last word at me as if he were on the point of breaking.

The distant rumble of thunder was growing louder. Suddenly it broke almost over our heads with a tremendous crash that dwarfed the noises of the city. Sheets of rain dashed against the building, and I got up to close a window that was open. The thermometer must have dropped twenty degrees, for the wind as I shut the window was icy cold.

I STOOD at the window a moment. Below me in the street not a person was to be seen. The city appeared to be illuminated, but deserted. The faint glow of the old-fashioned gas lamps on the corner only served to give a weird, greenish glow to the storm-swept streets. It was a night on which anything might be expected to happen.

Andrew Clyde spoke, wearily. "Give me another drink, and I'll tell you the whole story. I don't see how it can matter now. You might as well know—not that you can do anything about what is going to happen to me."

His head, with its matted white hair, was

bowed in his hands. Slowly he rocked back and forth in his chair, as if on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I felt a surge of pity for this man who was wavering between a dumb, beaten acceptance of what he thought was coming upon him, and the normal impulse to resist and fight as long as breath was in him.

He began his story. I lit my pipe and leaned back in the chair opposite, where I could watch his face under the light of the study lamp.

"I told you my name was Andrew Clyde," he began. "That was what I was christened, anyhow. But for years I've been known as 'Scotty, the Ear.' They called me that because I can hear the tumblers of a safe combination as they drop. You've heard of Scotty the Ear?"

Even in his predicament he was capable of leering at me, proud of his fame. But I could not remember ever having heard of anyone by that name. He seemed disappointed.

"Did you read the newspapers about two years ago—when everybody was talking about the Gresham murder? Well, I was one of the three who did it."

SUDDENLY I remembered. The four-year-old son of a Yonkers banker had been kidnaped, and when his abductors thought themselves in danger, they had thrown him from a carriage into the Bronx River.

"Yes, I was one of the men who kidnaped Bobby Gresham and hurled him to his death. But I've paid—God, how I've paid!

"If you remember, they caught the three of us a short time after the body of the boy was found. There wasn't much evidence against us. But they made it hot for us day after day. They wanted confessions. Finally, they said that if I'd turn evidence for the State, they'd free me. The district attorney kept after me. Every day they'd bring me into his office and he'd shoot questions at me, and frighten me with pictures of what would happen to me if I didn't tell.

"And I broke down and signed a confession, saying that Scar-face and Louis Moroni had killed the boy by throwing him into the river while I drove the horses. It wasn't true. I hadn't been driving—that was Scar-face.

"The case went to trial, and with me as a witness the State got a verdict of first-degree murder against both Scar-face and Louis. When the verdict was brought in, I was sitting in the courtroom. And I can still see the look that those two pals of mine gave me. It burned itself into my mind like—like——" He motioned toward the place where the scars had been.

"The cops let me go, then, with a warning to get out of town and stay out. I went south, and pulled a couple of safe-cracking jobs, alone. But I couldn't seem to settle anywhere. Everything seemed to keep leading me back, here to New York. I couldn't rest, or sleep. And about a month ago I came back.

"Scar-face and Louis were sent to the chair, and they both died cursing me, so I've been told. But I had to save myself. I didn't want to die. I don't want to die now. God, God, I don't want to die!"

I leaned forward. "But what's all this got to do with—with the burns you're having? I don't see——"

"Fool!" He almost screamed. "Just a year after the night Louis and Scar-face were sent to the death-house, the burns came to me! Seven nights they waited in the death-house—waited for death! And six times the burns have come to me. On the seventh night, just before midnight on Saturday a year ago today—they went to the chair! What will happen to me at midnight tonight? They're standing, just on the Other Side, waiting for me—dragging me through the veil the way they had to go!

"WHO knows what devilish things they have prepared for me where they are, if they can reach through to me here? When I was a boy, my mother used to tell me about the Wandering Jew, who was condemned never to rest until the end of eternity. Am I to be burned till then?"

He was sobbing, with his head buried in his hands, moaning like a wounded animal. But much of my sympathy for him was gone. His brutality about the crime he had committed, and his self-pity, left me with only a fascinated horror.

Clyde raised his head. "What time is it now? I haven't a watch. I can't bear to look at a watch or clock. But tell me quick what time it is!"

I made a sudden decision. The man, I thought, must have worried himself into the state he was in. He was hypnotizing himself, because of his guilty conscience, into a physical manifestation of what he had feared. I remembered that one of my books

at college—by Jung, I think—mentioned the case of a girl who dreamed of a great dog biting her and who woke up with deep tooth marks on her wrist, though she was in a locked room.

I thought I saw a way to free him. He was looking down at the floor. I hurriedly glanced at my watch, saw that the hands pointed to ten-forty, and set them back an hour. Then I showed him the face. I knew that if I could keep his mind off himself for an hour and twenty minutes, he would be out of danger of the strange delusion which was mastering him. Even then I did not believe that the supernatural could be entering into the case in any way. I felt proud of myself for having thought of the trick with the watch!

"Well, you have nearly two hours and a half before it is midnight," I told him cheerfully. "Can't you lie down for an hour and get some sleep? There is no danger for you, man, except your own fear. Fear has made you do strange things, and made you have strange and terrible experiences. There is not a doubt in my mind but that you can be cured from all this."

MY patient smiled bitterly. "You doctors are all alike. You think you can find out about everything in books and laboratories." Then his mood changed. "I don't want to die! Do you think there's a chance—just a chance—that the burns tonight won't be any worse than those of the other six nights? That I'll keep on living? I don't dare die—*They'll* be there. . . ."

I reassured him as much as I could. Finally I succeeded in quieting him, to some extent. He clung to the tiny hope that perhaps he had been insane or deluded, and that the burns had never been. But I had seen them. Anyway, he sat there in my armchair, his head in his hands.

As long as I live, I shall not forget the room as it looked that night. There was but one light, and it was near my patient. The rest of the long room was vague and shadowy. Against the walls my bookcases and medicine cabinets ranged themselves dimly and forebodingly. Outside was the storm, with the deep rumble of thunder and the splashing of rain. The wind had risen, and the building creaked and rattled with its force.

I was sitting at the other end of the room, next to the connecting door. After a little while I looked at my watch, and started to see that, allowing for the change I had made, the real time was eleven-thirty. A half hour longer. . . .

"What time is it now?" asked Clyde, eagerly. "Is it after twelve?" I showed him the watch, getting up and taking it over to him. He sank back.

"Only ten-thirty," he said slowly. "An hour and a half, and it will all be over, one way or the other."

I returned to my seat. I noticed that my heart was beating very rapidly, and that I was short of breath. Fear is a contagious disease of the nerves, the psychologists tell us. I remembered how the two friends of the man before me must have been waiting, a year ago, for the black-robed priest and the guards who were to take them through the Little Green Door. Try as I would, I could not free my mind from the picture of that procession within the gray walls of old Sing Sing. Only a year ago—and all that was mortal of those men had been dissolved in quicklime long months before! Had everything been destroyed? I was beginning to doubt the teachings of my science. For I had seen the burns, real burns. And I had seen them disappear.

My watch showed me that the actual time was eleven forty-five. I held it in front of my eyes and watched the second hand racing as I had never seen it before. It, too, seemed in a hurry to get over the next few minutes.

A lethargy crept over me. I was neither asleep nor awake, and was perfectly able to see everything in front of me. But if I had willed to move it would have been impossible. I felt myself drifting . . . drifting. . . .

The walls of my office seemed to fade out. The lights grew brighter, blindingly brighter. But I could not close my eyes. A strange, prickling sensation traveled up my spine, and my scalp muscles tightened.

Andrew Clyde half rose in his chair. He screamed at me, "You lied, you lied! You told me I had two hours and more. You lied!"

THEN he was forced back into the chair. I saw gray figures hovering around him—dim and formless figures which my mind did not dare to identify. They seemed to fasten his feet and hands, and to pass something around his throat, and before his eyes. He choked, and then was silent.

Outside, the thunder crashed directly overhead. Great bursts of rain and wind pounded on the windows. The building shook in the storm, and my heart almost

quit beating. I was afraid even to think.

For what seemed an interminable time the gray figures obscured my view of Andrew Clyde. I sat paralyzed in my chair. My pipe fell to the floor with a sharp sound. I had bitten the stem in two. I knew that I was dreaming and that all this would mercifully disappear as soon as I had waked.

But I could not awaken from that dream. I saw the gray figures draw back from the writhing figure of Andrew Clyde. It might have been my overwrought imagination, but when one of them turned, his face seemed to be seared across the nose and chin with a wide scar. But I could not be sure. I cannot be sure of anything that happened on that night of horrors, except that I lay helpless there.

There was a wait which seemed to me to be hours in length, although I know that it could not have been more than a few minutes. I held my breath until the blood was pounding in my ears.

Then one of the weird, gray figures raised his hand, pointing it at the man who sat twitching in my armchair. He held it there, accusingly, for a moment, and then he let it fall.

AT that move a great bolt of lightning exploded, seemingly just outside the windows. My ear-drums were almost shattered by the deafening "cr-r-rack" it made. The same instant the light, which had been so bright, so unusually bright, up to that moment, went down to a mere flickering glow, and remained there.

From the man named Andrew Clyde there came a great screaming, which reverberated through the room, and which rings in my ears sometimes today. He strained at his bonds, and then was still.

The sickish odor of burning human flesh filled the room, and made me choke. I was as incapable of motion as a chair. Try though I might, I could not even shut my eyes to what was going on before me. I was dreadfully afraid, not so much for myself as for my sanity. It was the fear of the Impossible—of the Unknown. I think I would rather die than face such terror again.

There seemed to be only two of the gray figures, although it had appeared to me a moment before that there were many of them. They leaned for a moment over the body of Andrew Clyde, which was slumped down in the chair. Then, for a second, I imagined that I saw three of them, fading out into the darkness and obscurity of the opposite wall. Were two of them supporting and leading the other? Was the soul of the traitor, Scotty the Ear, dragged protestingly into unknown horrors?

IT may have been that I was dreaming, and that my imagination, poisoned by the happenings of the previous week, had created all this structure of terror. But when I came to myself, it was morning, and the storm was over. Through the windows, the sunlight was pouring in—a long slant across the room to the figure in my armchair. I was stiff from sitting in a cramped position. As I rose to my feet, I found that I could hardly stand erect. I was afraid to look across the room to where the crumpled body of Andrew Clyde rested, in the summer sunlight.

Examination showed that Clyde met his death "by natural causes and act of God." His head, fearfully burned electrically, rested against a steam pipe which ran vertically through the building from the roof. His foot, likewise, was bent back against it, and it was likewise burned. Lightning?

But his face was set in an expression of the most abject terror, his mouth wide open, and his features contorted horribly. And I knew that Andrew Clyde had been visited with a vengeance which came from beyond the grave—a vengeance which he himself knew to be just.

There were no friends or relatives to claim the body, and as the dead man's doctor I made the funeral arrangements and saw that the remains of poor, weak Scotty the Ear were laid, I hope, to rest.

All this was twenty years ago, and I have forgotten as much of the terrible incident as I can. Strange things have happened to me since—other things that cannot be naturally explained. But in all my experience I have never spent another such night as I spent when I witnessed the ghostly execution of Andrew Clyde. And through it, I learned that man's knowledge and the little circle of natural laws which he has discovered are but the surface of an unplumbed pool, from whose vast depths strange bubbles sometimes rise.

PIECES of EIGHT

The quest for gold draws dead pirates from their graves at Lizard Island

By CAPT. HARRY McDONALD
As told to WILBERT WADLEIGH

McDONALD, serving as captain of Mark Vendome's boat on a search for buried treasure, soon learned that supernatural forces were antagonistic to the expedition. After finding a treasure map in the hilt of an old dagger, he saw the ghosts of Peg-Leg John, a long-dead pirate, and of Spencer, the former captain of the boat, who had committed suicide. And he heard the spectral pirate give a ghastly description of the burying of the treasure!

On arriving at Haiti, the Captain accompanied Vendome, his daughter Phyllis, who was in love with McDonald, and Vendome's nephew, Powell, to Pelican Island, where they dug up a chest of treasure previously located by the explorer. Then they went on to Lizard Island, where Peg-Leg's treasure was cached.

In spite of the weird menace of a phantom figure seen on a bluff above the shore, the party landed and put up their tents. Then, suddenly, Phyllis screamed that there was something in her hair. McDonald sprang forward and caught her as she fell.

Captain McDonald continues the story in his own words.

PHYLLIS had fainted, but we soon revived her. The cause of her fright had obviously been a bat from the dark cavern whose opening gaped blackly on the side of the cliff above us. I did not blame her for her sudden terror.

After she had recovered, I wandered a little way from our camp, trying to make out the landmarks about us.

Though I had never set foot on the little island before, I had observed it many a time on my voyages and was fairly familiar with the nature of its geological formations, which were principally ancient lava, volcanic rock, coral, and sand. The vegetation consisted principally of various species of sub-tropical cactus. Having made a copy of the island from the ancient map of Peg-Leg John, I knew where we were situated,

despite the darkness. In the north I could make out the jagged shadow of Needle Rock, seeming like a black, gigantic specter in a pointed hood. I knew that, behind me on the right, directly southeast, was Arrow-head Rock, and that forty paces south of this, if the ancient pirate's directions were true, was the buried treasure he had hidden from Morgan, and had expected to reclaim and enjoy.

PHYLLIS called out to me once, begging me not to stray far from the tents, and I spoke reassuringly to her. Vendome joined me a few moments later, scanning the clouds above us anxiously. We had made preparations for a downpour, by digging trenches around the tents. The shelters were of substantial twelve-ounce canvas, with heavy flies over each, and were securely staked.

"McDonald," Vendome said at length, "I am sorry for my attitude on the launch, when I learned of the state of affairs between you and my daughter. It was quite a surprise, of course, but I was rather unfair to you. The truth was, I was a bit unstrung after seeing that strange figure on the cliff."

I grasped his hand firmly, knowing that he was sincere, though I still felt the sting of the remarks he had made. "I, too, must make an apology," I said, "for having come to believe in the existence of ghosts, despite my disavowals when you solicited my services in Boston."

He glanced at me oddly. "You really do believe such things exist, then?" he muttered.

"I must accept the evidence of my senses," I replied, irritated by his question, knowing that he, together with the rest of us, had seen the phantom on the cliff. But, to my surprise, he mentioned this event again.

"We can sometimes be deceived, Captain," he said. "While the figure we saw on the bluff had a weird appearance, I do not believe that it was a ghost. It may have been a man—some hermit of the island perhaps——"

I regarded him with frank disgust. "Vendome, you know damned well that it was luminous and transparent, and that it vanished when I turned the beam of the searchlight upon it. I think you are trying to deceive yourself."

He looked away.

"Besides," I pointed out, "there is no water on this island and no vegetation that would sustain life. And I remember, now, that when I was a pilot in this region several years ago, I heard rumors about this island being haunted."

Vendome gave a deprecating exclamation. "Rank superstition!"

"So I thought, then. I'm not so sure, now."

He was silent for a while, deep in thought. "McDonald," he said suddenly, "as you know, I have been interested in archeology and kindred subjects for many years, and have poked about among ancient ruins in many out-of-the-way corners of the earth. At first, when old skeletons and other objects were unearthed, I was inclined to feel a trifle sensitive. But during the twenty years that have followed, I have become hardened to that sort of thing."

He paused, as if seeking my approval.

"I can understand that," I said.

"Well, with my own hands I have sorted and articulated something like a hundred and fifty ancient human and simian skeletons, to say nothing of bones of prehistoric mammals, reptiles, and birds." His voice quavered. "But when I brought the skeletons of those five pirates on board the *Gray Ghost*, the old feeling of horror returned to me. It was vague, but I was aware of it."

He drew nearer to me, lowering his voice. "Perhaps I was afraid," he went on; "somehow I felt a subtle and indefinable sense of dread. I laughed at myself, wondering if advancing age had something to do with it, but the feeling persisted. I put it from my mind as much as I could, after we left Haiti, but when Spencer went mad and jumped overboard, and Phyllis and others claimed they had seen ghosts on board, my nerves began to give way. And when these strange occurrences continued after leaving Boston on this trip, I spent many anxious hours racking my brains for a solution to it all." He shuddered. "I am not the man I was six months ago, McDonald. I feel ten years older."

At that moment we both were startled by a strange sound overhead and saw two shadowy forms fluttering shoreward.

"More bats," Vendome muttered; "that old cave must be full of them. Curious creatures; I once made a careful study of their habits."

WE gazed about into the gloomy fastnesses of the island, speculating upon our probable success next day, and at length we returned to the tents. Powell was standing at the flap of the larger one, smoking, and staring moodily out at the shadowy form of the launch, and Phyllis was making some hot chocolate on the gasoline stove.

It was nearly two o'clock before we retired, Vendome and Powell to the large tent, Phyllis to the central and smaller one, and I to the one on the end. Though my cot was comfortable enough, I lay awake for a long time, thinking over the events that had befallen us since putting out of Boston, conscious all the while of the somber and oppressive atmosphere of the place. It was as if, after the extinguishing of our lights, the shadows of the island had crept forward stealthily, converging about us, and pressing against the canvas of our shelters. Yet, save for the dashing of spray upon the rocks below and the occasional cries of seagulls, there was no sound; the very stillness contributed to the mysterious and brooding effect.

Overcome with drowsiness at length, I was dropping off into slumber when I heard a sound outside like the scuffing of boots. Starting into instant wakefulness, I listened, and the sound continued, growing gradually louder. Someone was approaching the camp!

I rose quickly, and securing my automatic, I went to the flap and lifted it, peering out into the darkness. But I saw no one, and the footsteps had ceased. I was considering getting my flashlight and taking a walk around the camp, when I heard the scuffing sounds again, seeming to come from the rear of my tent. I stole out into the night, stepping carefully over the tent-ropes and rounding the shelter, but, though the sounds were only a few feet in front of me, not a soul was in sight.

Soul? Suddenly, directly behind the central tent, in which Phyllis was sleeping, a ghostly figure seemed to take shape! Struck dumb with amazement, I stood rooted to the spot as the specter staggered toward me!

I saw that its garb resembled that of Peg-Leg John, though this phantom seemed to possess two legs, which were encased in boots that flared out and were turned down at the knee. A wraith-like sash was about its waist, and a bandanna was bound around its forehead. I caught a good glimpse of its face as it drew near—a spectral, hideous countenance, distorted by pain and suffering, the lips moving as if muttering groans, the tongue protruding!

As if turned to stone, I stood staring at the apparition as it staggered by within a yard of me, seeming unconscious of my presence, and I caught a faint muttering:

"Water—my soul for—wa-ter——"

And it lurched on, *through* the corner of my tent, stumbling down the rocky slope toward the shore. In horrified fascination, I stared after it. Once it stumbled at a place where there was nothing to stumble over, and pitched headlong to the sand. As I gazed at the prostrate specter with a sort of fear-stricken compassion, a shadow loomed suddenly beside me, and I wheeled about to see Powell, in his shirt-sleeves, a revolver in his hand.

"God!" he gasped. "You've seen it?"

I POINTED silently to the fallen figure, and as I did so, it gave a writhing movement and rose slowly, to stumble on. Vendome joined us, struggling into his coat, wanting to know what was the matter.

"There's the ghost we saw on the cliff!" I told him.

He followed my pointing finger, gasping audibly.

"Heavens! who can it be? He's heading for the cave!"

Sure enough, the phantom had lurched abruptly to one side, and was making its way over the face of the rocky wall to the dark opening of the ancient cavern. Once it nearly slipped off into the sea, tottering on the edge of the precarious path for a moment, and then it seemed to steady itself, one ghostly hand clinging to the side of the bluff, and with a sudden lurch, it staggered into the opening and was gone.

We stared at each other mutely for several moments.

"Well, Vendome," I said, breaking the silence, "do you believe your eyes now?"

He frowned, passing a hand nervously to his forehead. "I—I don't know; I don't know," he gasped; "but—surely it must be a human being; some island recluse. The sound of the boots scraping, you know——"

"Yes," I said sarcastically, "it walked right through one corner of my tent—two walls of twelve-ounce duck."

They both stared at me.

"And I heard it speak," I continued; "it's tongue was swollen with thirst, and it was crying for water."

Vendome's face went ashen, and Powell drew a sharp breath.

"Good Heavens!" Vendome cried, aghast; "surely, McDonald, you—you must be mistaken! What if—if——"

"Listen!" exclaimed Powell hoarsely, clutching my arm.

We strained our ears, catching a faint murmur of conversation that seemed to come from the shadowy interior of the island.

Though we could not make out any words, we could tell that the voices were masculine. There seemed to be two or three persons.

Powell gave a nervous, hysterical laugh, and Vendome turned a pale face to me, chattering:

"See? There are other people on this island!"

I took a grip upon myself, and gritting my teeth together, I seized him by the wrist.

"Come on, then," I muttered grimly; "we'll find out! Powell," I snapped, "you stay here and see that Phyllis comes to no harm."

AND dragging Vendome along with me, I started in the direction of the voices, determined to see for myself if we had other specters to deal with, or if the voices were those of human beings. Vendome mumbled some protests, but I paid no attention to him, keeping a firm hold on his wrist.

"Be quiet!" I ordered; "we're going to see who those speakers are—if I have to carry you there bodily!"

He gave a moan, trying to free himself. "Your fingers—you're hurting me!" he gasped.

"Well, walk beside me, then," I snapped. "Don't be a coward, Vendome! It's not becoming to one of your social position, age, and attainments."

I glanced at him as I spoke, and saw him wince. Without another word, he stepped up beside me, and I relaxed my grip. The voices were growing more distinct, and I knew that we were headed in the direction of Arrow-head Rock, near which Peg-Leg John's treasure was supposed to be buried. But as we ascended a rise, the voices metamorphosed into hoarse cries, and we heard the sounds of a scuffle.

Vendome gasped, halting and clutching my arm.

"Come on!" I growled, continuing up the rise.

We had only taken two or three steps when a shot rang out from the direction the voices had come from, and I heard the gruff words:

"In ye go, blast ye!"

The voice sent a chill through me, for I had heard it once before. Gripping Vendome's arm, I crept to the top of the rise, staring down through the gloom. Directly below us, not more than twenty steps away, a ghostly apparition was shoveling a luminous, grayish substance into what appeared to be a phantom pit!

I rubbed my eyes, meeting Vendome's affrighted gaze.

"By all that's holy!" he gasped hoarsely, staring down at the unearthly figure.

I forced myself to look again, and a surge of stark terror gripped me.

"Good Lord!" I cried. "It's Peg-Leg John!"

We gazed at the phantom in horrible fascination, as it continued shoveling the strange substance into the pit. Suddenly it broke into a weird and unearthly chantey. Spellbound, we stood as if rooted to the spot, watching and listening, while the specter chanted the same verse over and over again until it was indelibly graven in my mind:

Pieces of Eight, Reals *of Plate,*
Double Doubloons an' precious stones;
Bury th' loot in th' light o' th' moon,
An' cover th' chest wi' pirates' bones——

I listened and watched, the blood pounding in my temples. All at once the phantom straightened, and slinging the ghostly spade over its shoulder, advanced toward us!

Vendome gave a shuddering moan, and collapsed at my feet. Instinctively, I knelt down beside him, but I was unable to take my eyes from the specter. It drew upon us, swinging with a peculiar lurching stride on its peg-leg, chanting another horrible ditty:

Three score and twenty walked th' plank—
Them what could walk. As for th' rest,
They hung by th' thumbs from th' ratlines,
Screamin' an'——

I CANNOT recall the remainder of the chantey. The phantom pirate loomed above us, striding through Vendome's inert body, continuing down the slope toward the cove, chanting something about hanging men to yard-arms. I was still staring after it when Vendome writhed and gave a groan, and suddenly realizing that he was in need of attention, I closed my eyes to shut out the lurching apparition, and bent over the explorer.

"McDonald!" he gasped weakly. "What—what happened?"

"You must have fainted," I managed to reply, lifting him to a sitting position. "It's all over; Peg-Leg just passed by."

He shuddered, and rose shakily to his feet, and I got to my own feet and gazed toward the shore. The peg-legged specter

was still visible, and was passing through the edge of our camp. I was about to call Vendome's attention to it when his fingers dug into my shoulder.

"My Heavens!" he gasped. "Look!"

"I know," I began, and then I saw that he was looking the other way. I followed his gaze down into the hollow that the phantom pirate had just left, and saw a terrifying sight. Another spectral figure was in the act of crawling out of the hole—fighting its way out of the luminous, grayish earth that Peg-leg John had just spaded into the phantom pit!

There was something familiar about the figure, and as it rested a moment upon outspread arms I saw that it was the same ghost I had seen near my tent. It seemed exhausted, and was drawing in deep draughts of air. Then it struggled to its feet, and lurched toward us, stumbling up the slope. We were staring at it, dumb with terror, when a bright flash shot out from the corner of my tent, followed by a sharp report. Then there was a shrill scream that chilled my very soul.

"Phyllis!" I gasped.

The power of movement suddenly returned, and I sprang into action, Vendome following me. As we advanced to the camp, I saw a shadowy form dart away from the tents and plunge down the bank toward the beach. Simultaneously came Phyllis' voice in another outcry:

"Help! *Help*—Harry! *Har-ry*——"

I reached the corner of my tent, and tripped over a tent-rope, nearly falling. Regaining my balance, I rounded the shelter and dashed into the central tent—to run into Phyllis' arms!

"Oh!" she moaned, relaxing limply, "thank God!"

"What happened?" I exclaimed. "Tell me, dear."

"I—I don't know——"

THE sharp report of a revolver rang out again in the direction of the cove. Vendome, who had reached the entrance of the tent, started violently and gazed toward the beach.

"I'll bet that's Clayton," he gasped, glancing around nervously. "Phyllis——"

"I—I'm all right now, Daddy," she faltered. "But what is it all about? That first shot awakened me, and——"

We heard Powell shouting to us from the beach, and the three of us hurried to the cove. Clayton was standing near our beached dory, a revolver in his hand, staring out across the inlet. As we jumped down the bank, he turned a haggard face toward us, swaying weakly.

"My God!" was all he could say.

I REACHED his side, and gripped him by the shoulders.

"What happened, Powell?" I demanded sharply. "What were you shooting at?"

He shuddered, and sat down abruptly on a rock.

"I'm afraid I'm going mad," he muttered.

"Perhaps you have company," I said grimly. "Come; what happened?"

Falteringly, he told us that when Vendome and I had gone inland to investigate the mysterious voices, he had stepped to Phyllis' tent to make sure that she was still sleeping, which, strangely enough, had been the case. Then, upon emerging again, he had heard a thumping sound, and a voice raised in a chant.

"Well, I couldn't see the man clearly at first, because he was too far away. He had already passed the line of tents and was in the act of descending the bank toward this beach. I stared down at him, and realized suddenly that he was bending over the dory, preparing to slide it into the water."

Powell took a deep breath, mopping his forehead.

"Naturally, I couldn't permit anyone to steal the boat and leave us marooned on this desert island. I fired, after taking careful aim. But the shot missed, apparently. Phyllis screamed," he went on, glancing at her, "but I knew I must save the boat. I hurried down here, firing again as I reached the beach. Then I saw that the man had scrambled into the dory and was pushing it out toward the reefs with one leg in the water—God!"

He gave a hysterical laugh, pointing to our dory, which was high up on the beach as we had left it, the painter fastened to a point of rock.

"It wasn't our boat at all!" he gasped. "It was a phantom boat; I suddenly realized it. And I saw that the man was also a phantom, and as he scrambled over the gunwales I caught sight of a wooden leg! Then, as the Thing took up spectral oars, I caught a good glimpse of its face—a patch over one eye, a bandanna around the forehead, and the ghostly, bearded features. It was Peg-leg John—the phantom pirate!"

We stared out into the gloom of the cove, but the spectral boat and pirate had

vanished. We could make out the shadow of the launch, anchored where we had left it, and beyond it the jagged outlines of the spray-tossed rocks that jettied the channel.

"Lord!" Vendome muttered. "This is an island of lost souls!"

We made our way back to camp through the brooding darkness, discussing the strange events that had disturbed our rest. Whatever Vendome had believed before, he admitted now that we had seen phantoms.

It was Phyllis who was the calmest of our party, once the details of the excitement were gone over, and the four of us were seated around the gasoline lantern in the large tent.

"As you said, Daddy," she declared, "this seems to be an island of lost souls. They surround this tent; they are the tortured souls of those old pirates, doomed by some celestial law to haunt the region."

"Death, then," Vendome muttered abstractedly to himself, "is not all—is not the end of life." After a pause, he went on in a confused manner: "But even if that is true, why is it that mortals, such as we four, can *see* persons who have passed beyond, into their new form? And why, if we have seen such phantoms since leaving Boston, haven't we seen such specters before?"

Phyllis reflected gravely. "There is no human being who can answer your questions, Daddy. We can only suppose that there is a Divine Intelligence or an inexorable celestial moral law that exhibits these specters to us as horrible examples—as a warning to us to tread the paths of righteousness—and at the same time to give us the opportunity to free these tortured spirits from the bonds that hold them to the earth, if we are so disposed."

"Samaritans to ghosts?" I exclaimed.

"You might call it that," she said.

There was a silence of several moments.

"Well," Powell remarked at length, "Lord knows that if any spirits can be earthbound, the spirits of ancient, murderous pirates would be." He shuddered, staring at the brooding darkness through the tent flap.

ONCE again the feeling I had experienced in my own tent grew upon me; the impression that the shadows of the desert island had stolen upon us, and were converging in a sinister, crushing movement.

"I feel creepy all over," Phyllis remarked, adjusting her sweater nervously. "And I know I'll not be able to sleep another wink."

"Nor I," her father grumbled unhappily.

"Well," I exclaimed, glancing at my watch, "it will soon be sunrise, thank heaven."

"Soon!" Powell muttered; "nearly two hours; might as well be two years!"

Vendome gave a hollow laugh, fidgeting, and Phyllis rose and walked to the gasoline stove.

"I'll fix that," she said cheerfully; "we may as well have breakfast now. How would some fried bacon, biscuits, and hot coffee strike you?"

WE gave a hearty response, and she began sorting the provisions, giving each of us some task to do. While I pumped the air-compressor, Vendome and Powell set about arranging the table. I lit the burners, and adjusted the portable oven, while Phyllis deftly mixed up the biscuit dough. Completing the adjustment of the oven, I was set to work peeling potatoes. Soon the intriguing odors of bacon, coffee and baking biscuits assailed our appreciative nostrils.

I don't believe any of us ever enjoyed a meal more thoroughly than that one; it stimulated us spiritually and mentally as well as physically. Phyllis tactfully piloted our conversation away from matters pertaining to the island and the treasure, and we talked of more cheerful things. Before we realized it, the pitchy darkness outside had lightened, and in a few minutes gray dawn crept over the island, the phantom shadows scurrying before it.

We went outside to view the sunrise, walking to the top of the high cliff over the cavern, where we had seen the sea-gazing specter the night before. The sunrise was exceptionally beautiful. The sky was dotted with clouds, and as the yellow disk appeared above the horizon, the flaming rays pierced the billowy masses like the swords of archangels, tingeing them with delicate colors of amber, orange, and rose. A shimmering, golden path shot toward us across the ocean, like the wake of some heavenly ship.

From our elevation, we could see over the entire island, and note its desolation. Not a tree of any sort could be seen; merely shrubs, dry grass, and cactus, with here and there patches of flowers and straggling ice-plant. At the northern head of the island rose the jagged spire of Needle Rock, the sunlight bathing it and other rocky formations in a mottled glow that revealed the volcanic blues, lavenders, and maroons of the weather-beaten substance. Beyond, and

in a circle as far as the eye could reach, other islands of various sizes and shapes jutted out of the sea.

"And that must be Arrow-head Rock," Vendome exclaimed, pointing in the direction we had taken in our terrifying excursion a few hours before.

I saw the slope we had ascended, and noted the shallow basin in which we had seen the spectral pirates. Thirty yards or so to the north, and directly southeast of where we stood, was a pile of rocks a good deal higher than surrounding ones, the central one almost as sharply pointed as Needle Rock.

"Yes," I said, "and it is from here, above the cave, that the first line is to be paced. A hundred paces, Peg-Leg's directions gave it, to Arrow-head Rock. Of course, we know where the rock is; that was simply to establish the general location of it——"

Powell interrupted me with an exclamation, and we saw that he was staring down at the ground at his feet.

"Somebody was marooned on this island," he cried. "Look at these rocks—the way they are arranged, as if for a signal fire!"

I glanced around. There was no doubt we were standing partly within a circular line of rocks that no whim of chance could have so placed. We examined them with interest, digging about among them. All were deeply buried.

"By George!" Vendome cried, "whoever set these out must have died over a century ago. Let's dig up this one, McDonald."

We fell to work, and using the heels of our boots and my machete, we managed to dig up one of the boulders. Vendome examined it critically.

"The base of it shows the discolorations of an ancient fire," he remarked. "Judging from the amount of soil around the rocks—all of which was blown here by the wind, of course—it is quite possible that our castaway built his fire as long ago as the seventeenth century!"

We exchanged eloquent glances.

"And the specter we saw here when we cast anchor," said Phyllis in an awed voice, "was the castaway's ghost!"

A horrible suspicion stole upon me, crystallizing into a positive conviction. The castaway had been the pirate that had stumbled by me, dying of thirst—the same specter Vendome and I had seen crawl from the phantom pit!

I met Vendome's gaze, and read the same ghastly conviction in his eyes.

"He was a pirate!" Vendome exclaimed; "could it be possible—God!"

"What is it, Daddy?" Phyllis exclaimed anxiously.

Vendome looked toward the scene of the supernatural occurrences he and I had witnessed, muttering under his breath, and Phyllis and Powell glanced askance at me.

AFTER a few moments we hurried back to the tents, secured picks and spades, and proceeded to the group of weathered boulders. The highest, we found upon examining it from the south side, had the crude shape of a huge arrow-head carved on its surface and was undoubtedly the Arrow-head Rock of Peg-Leg John's ancient chart. Though I had committed the simple directions to memory, I extracted the copy I had made, and read them off:

"Take one hundred paces southeast to arrow-head rock. Sight the line of the needle point in north and take forty paces south from arrow-head. If points of both rocks are on line, dig."

I proceeded to step off the forty paces, starting from the base of the central rock, and heading due south. Then I turned, and finding the line about two feet off to the side, I stepped over until the points of Arrow-head Rock and Needle Rock were centered.

"That must be the spot," Vendome exclaimed excitedly, seizing a pick. "Pitch in, everybody!"

WE did, with a vengeance, though we soon found that the ground was hard. Phyllis gave up after several minutes, and stood and watched us. In two hours, we only had a hole four feet in depth, by six square, and Phyllis went to the camp to bring us some water to quench our thirst. An hour later, we had made a little better progress, and the hole was nearly seven feet deep.

"My heavens!" Vendome gasped, "it's about time we struck something!"

But apparently the treasure had been buried deep, for by noon we had excavated a hole twelve feet in depth by seven feet in breadth. By that time we were no little chagrined, as well as fatigued.

"We must have miscalculated, some way," I ventured.

We discussed the situation, at length abandoning the project temporarily and going to

lunch. It seemed inconceivable that the treasure could be buried any deeper, and none of us wanted to admit the discouraging possibility that the treasure had been unearthed years before. A dispute over several details arose, among these the proper length of the pace required. After lunch, we went to the cliff above the cave, and starting from a point on the edge directly over the opening, and sighting a line directly southeast, I paced off the distance to the base of Arrow-head Rock.

INSTEAD of a hundred paces, it was slightly less than eighty!

For a long time we puzzled over this. Wild theories were broached, among them the possibility that part of the cliff had worn away through the centuries, falsifying the distance. But at length I hit upon what seemed to be the secret of our failure.

"Remember the confession that the ghost of Peg-Leg made to me?" I cried. "There were four pirates besides Peg-Leg John. I believe that the one he called Dinky Hayes paced off the lines—and he was probably nicknamed Dinky because he was undersized!"

"Sure enough!" exclaimed Vendome, flushed with excitement; "naturally, his step would be much shorter than yours."

We figured the thing out by proportion, finding that we had dug our pit quite a number of feet too far south. With fresh enthusiasm, we set to work on a new excavation, Phyllis joining in. We had descended seven feet when my pick struck something brittle. This proved to be a human skull!

"Eureka!" cried Vendome, who had been resting on the edge; "careful, McDonald—Clayton; you fellows come out, and let me in there."

We were only too glad to scramble out, and we watched the archeologist carefully uncover more bones, among them two skulls. These he was going to pass up to me, but I allowed Powell, who had assisted Vendome before in such gruesome work, to receive them and sort them out. I stared down into the pit for a glimpse of the treasure chests. The last of the bones having been removed, Vendome continued digging until he had gone three feet deeper in the center.

"By George!" he gasped, at length, "that's odd! No more bones, and no sign of treasure yet. . . . How many skulls have you up there?"

"Three," I called.

"But if Peg-Leg buried four men," Vendome protested, "we should have—why—by all that's holy!"

We saw him stoop down and pick up something, but could not discern what it was. He remained crouched over for some moments, and finally straightened up with a handful of dull disks.

"Pieces of Eight!" he ejaculated, throwing them up. "I found them loose. Gad! I'll bet somebody took out that treasure!"

I jumped down beside him, and we dug deeper, at length striking some hard substance. Further investigation disclosed that we had struck bed-rock.

Powell helped two very discouraged and disgusted men out of that pit. Save for the seven Pieces of Eight Vendome had picked up, there was no treasure.

And then a sinister theory that had been circulating in my mind, and that I knew Vendome had been toying with, demanded expression.

"The fourth pirate was buried alive!" I cried—"and through some miracle, managed to climb out!"

"Exactly!" Vendome responded quickly. "Heaven knows how he escaped suffocation, though the soil is gravelly enough to admit air. That's just what happened, McDonald; he got out, and dug up the treasure himself!"

WE stared at each other. Phyllis broke the silence.

"Then, if the ghost last night—the one that was dying of thirst—was the ghost of this pirate——"

"——*he died on this island!*" finished her father triumphantly. "He hid the treasure somewhere else, hoping that he would be rescued and could come back some day and claim it. But he never was rescued! And, by George——"

Whatever Vendome was about to say we never knew, for at that moment a violent tremor shook the island, the edge of the hole where he had been standing crumbled, and he dropped into the pit!

A strange disaster has fallen like a bolt of lightning upon the treasure-hunters! But they will continue their search in spite of fire, blood—or ghosts! The amazing outcome of McDonald's expedition into the bat-infested, haunted cavern will give you an absolutely new thrill. In the October issue of GHOST STORIES—*on the news stands August 23rd.*

GLASS or- What ?

Scoff if you will—but the vase in this story of mine was haunted!

By
FRANCES LANE

As told to
NELL KAY

YOU have asked me (said the lady of uncertain age with the somber eyes, whose drooping hat feather swayed with every swerve of the train) if I believe in the occult. A few years ago I might have given you a decided, "No." But now—let me tell you of the remarkable experience I had which compelled me to change my mind. And, strange though it may seem to you, it concerns, principally, a vase.

I am Miss Frances Lane, of Starbrook, Illinois. Perhaps you have heard of the Lanes of Starbrook? Well, no matter. I mention the fact that I come of a well-known and respectable family, so that you may feel sure of the veracity of what I am going to relate.

I was arranging flowers in my home one morning, a few days before Easter, about six years ago. I had a large bowl of Easter lilies on the center table of my parlor.

At the side of the room there is one tall, narrow window, beneath which stands a low tabouret, and upon this I had a slender glass vase. I am interested in getting artistic effects in the arrangement of my rooms. Perhaps when you reach my age, and especially if you remain single, you too will have some such little hobby or idiosyncrasy. So, in this tall, slender vase, by the high, narrow window, I had one single long-stemmed lily from the bowl; and the effect pleased me.

An hour or so later, in drawing down the window-shade to soften the glare of the western sun, I accidentally overturned this vase, and sent it crashing to the floor. The effect of that tall window was at once spoiled for me, and the bareness of it irritated me.

So I went down to the store, bought another vase, put water and another tall lily in it, and sat down to view the effect. It was even prettier than before, as the vase, which was of clear white glass, had a long, graceful swell, with a delicately fluted edge turned over.

It being now dinner-time, I left the parlor, and did not return till some hours later, just before retiring for the night. I went over to the narrow window to take another look at the new vase. To my surprise, the lily in it was dead—completely dried up and shriveled, as if it had been out in a hot sun for hours. Looking closely, I saw that the water in the vase was all but gone—a mere half-inch remained at the bottom of the vase.

"Amelia must surely have emptied the water out," I thought. Amelia is a young colored girl who comes in daily, and she had now gone home for the night. I threw out the dead flower, put another in its place, and filled up the vase with fresh water.

THE next morning I went to look at my flowers. Those in the bowl were still fresh and sweet, but again the one in the new vase was dead, and the water entirely gone. Amelia was preparing breakfast. I called her, and asked her why she had emptied out the water.

"Ah never done so, Miss Lane," she assured me earnestly. "Ah never touch them vases since you done tole me not to."

Well—I had to believe her. But why the water should dry up so quickly was a mystery to me. I had kept flowers in that window before, in the old vase, and they had stayed fresh for days. I examined the glass carefully, but there was no crack or leak in it—nor was there any stain on the top of the tabouret. Being of wicker, I thought perhaps a water stain might not show—but the water *would* drain through on to the floor. So I looked carefully at the floor. There was not the slightest marring of the polish. The water, then, had not leaked away, nor been spilled. It surely must have been poured out. But by whom? I lived entirely alone, as I still do, with the exception of Amelia's daily attendance. Another thought struck me: would a flower wither so utterly, just through lack of water? This one seemed not merely faded, but dried up and shriveled—blasted—as if by a sudden, scorching heat.

I filled up the vase again with cold water. Not wishing to waste any more flowers, I left only the water in it, and went into the other room for my breakfast. As soon as I had finished, I returned to the parlor and looked at the vase. At least half of the water was gone. I lifted the vase—it felt warm. The nearer to the bottom I moved my hand, the hotter it grew. I felt gingerly underneath the base—it was literally scorching to my touch, and I all but dropped it. Replacing it on the tabouret, I examined the floor beneath. The latter was quite cool. What, then, could cause this strange heat in the vase of water?

You may well look puzzled. So was I. But I resolved to experiment. Emptying the vase of its hot water, I cooled off the glass and dropped a piece of ice in. For a moment, nothing happened. Then, all of a sudden, a spurt of sizzling steam shot up and the ice was gone.

I was thoroughly mystified, and became so intrigued with the thing that all I had any interest in doing for the rest of the day was filling up the vase with cold water and watching it evaporate. Day after day I experimented, always with the same result.

I became so obsessed with the desire to find out the cause of the strange phenomenon, that my health began to suffer, and I grew nervous and unable to sleep. If I went for a walk, I found myself staring into every store window where glass was displayed, to see if there was a vase like mine. The thing began to exert a horrible kind of fascination. I went back to the store where I had purchased it. I plainly remembered having seen three in a row, all alike, because I had looked at them for flaws and had picked the one I thought most perfect. But the storekeeper did not recall my purchasing any such vase, nor did he remember having others like it, nor selling any recently. The other two, which I knew he had had, were gone.

Each time I returned home, I found my eyes seeking my narrow window as I came down the street, and trying to make out if the water I always left in the vase, was gone yet.

At last it was with me as strongly in the night time as in the day. While lying awake, unable to sleep no matter what sedatives I resorted to, I would become suddenly possessed by a strong urge to go downstairs and look at the seemingly bewitched vase. This urge, however, I exerted every effort to quell, for I feared madness if I gave way to it. I mentally pictured myself, a woman in a nightrobe, issuing forth from her room

in the dead of night to go downstairs and look at a vase of water. It seemed too ridiculous, as well as frightening, even to *my* overstrained sense of the normal.

Why didn't I take the vase upstairs to my room where I could see it? I thought of that, too; but the same fear of madness stopped me. It was difficult enough, as it was, to find sleep.

IF the thing were placed beside my bed, I knew that sleep would become impossible. It had such an absolute sway over me, that I could do nothing but stare in fascination at its receding water, as long as I was in the same room with it.

At last, one day, my old friend Doctor Pratt dropped in to see me. We have lived opposite, and known each other, ever since school days. At one time there had been a brief romance between us, but the years had drifted us apart and now there remained a sedate, solid friendship.

"Why, Frances, you're looking terribly ill," he cried in astonishment. "What ails you? Nervous? Can't sleep? What is it?"

And so I told him about the strange vase which stood in the tall, narrow window.

He didn't laugh; but he looked at me with excessive seriousness, and ordered me sharply to go away for a change of scenery.

"It wouldn't do any good," I replied, "because I know I'd have to take the thing with me. I couldn't leave it."

"You're talking like a crazy girl!" he cried irritably. I always was a girl, to Stephen Pratt—he treated me still in the same didactic manner he had used as a little boy—which was one reason I had refused to obey him when he commanded me to marry him. But I am wandering. "I'll break the damn thing," he cried, "if nothing else will stop your silly illusion."

He strode over to the tabouret and seized the vase in his hand. Then he dropped it suddenly—not, however, with an intent to break it, but because he had found it hot enough to burn his fingers.

"What have you had in it!" he cried in exasperation. "You might have warned me it was hot."

"I've had nothing in it but cold water," I answered, "and as soon as I leave the water in, it gets hot, as I told you, and the water evaporates. If I leave the vase empty, it seems to stay the same as any other vase. But, Stephen, look—you dropped it on the hardwood floor, and it hasn't broken!"

It hadn't. It had rolled beneath the tabouret, and its fluted edge had struck against the wall, but it wasn't even cracked. Yet it appeared to be made of the finest crystal glass.

Doctor Pratt was now not quite so sceptical about what I had told him. He picked up the vase, which was growing cooler, and examined it. Then he tapped it ringingly with his fingernail. The resounding ring was clear and shrill—but, to our amazement, instead of dying away, it grew higher and shriller. I stared at Stephen with a white face of fright. For the ringing became a shout—a shriek—and died on a note of human agony.

"What's the thing made of?" cried the doctor, dropping it hastily on to the tabouret. "There's something unusual about it, I must say, Frances. I never heard a sound like that come from striking ordinary glass. *Is* it glass, or——?" He left his sentence unfinished, and regarded the vase with deepening interest. "But," he added, "it's nothing supernatural, of course, as you seem to think; it's doubtless some foreign matter mixed in with the glass that gives it a different reaction. But if you're going to make yourself ill over it, I'll——"

He was interrupted by Amelia's entrance. There was a hurry call over the telephone for the doctor, relayed by his office assistant. So, calling over his shoulder that he would be in again to see me as soon as he could; and shouting from the hall some directions, which he said I must follow; and calling back through the outer door a loud assertion that his original advice regarding change of scene was still the best, but that if I *would* be pig-headed, I *would;* he finally disappeared through the garden gate—and the vase remained on its small table, chaste and intact, with the westering sun shining through it.

That night, I lay awake as usual, fighting the strange urge which came to me, to get up and go downstairs and look at the vase.

"I wonder if there is some reason for this urge," I pondered. "Perhaps, if I once give way to it, my obsession will leave me. On the other hand, it might lay stronger hold upon me, so that I shall never be able to resist it again, and must pass day and night gazing at the thing until my mind leaves me."

Suddenly, as I lay pitting my weakening will against the magnetic force which seemed to be emanating from the vase and drawing me towards it, I heard above the soughing of the April night-wind, another

sound—a clear, high ringing of glass. And it came—I was certain of it—from the parlor below me. The sound rose louder and higher, turned into a mingling shout and shriek, and died away again, leaving me staring tensely into the darkness, listening. I shivered with fear. For, with the dying of the cry, the force which urged me to go downstairs increased its power, and I knew that I must obey it. And yet I dared not, because of a presentiment of impending horror which assailed me.

At last, however, against all my desire, the urge possessed me with such strength, that I arose, slipped on my bathrobe, and descended the stairs. I was alone in the house, and a dead silence prevailed, except for my own slow footsteps creaking down the stairs.

TWO senses were at war within me. One was the feeling that I must go on; the other was a horrible, creeping dread of what I was to see.

I found the electric switch in the hall as I reached the foot of the stairs, and snapped on the light. It reassured me a little. I would have to enter the parlor in the dark, however, for the electric button in that room was over by the fireplace, at the far end of the room. I opened the door and pushed it back wide before entering the room—fearing something indefinable.

As the door swung back, the tall, narrow window with the vase in front of it confronted me, directly opposite, and my eyes instantly found it—with startling swiftness. For over there on the tabouret where the vase stood, I saw a light, a diffused, white incandescent glow. My heart thumped, but I advanced into the room and drew near it. Then I saw that the light came from within the bowl of the vase, and that it grew brighter and more dazzling as I watched it, rising in waves of white-hot flame up the sides of the long neck, and finally pouring itself out from the top into the room, vanishing at once as soon as it left the confines of the fluted rim, like a disintegrating gas.

Then suddenly I heard the glass begin to ring as if struck upon, and the ringing rose in shrillness as it had before, and became a human cry. The cry increased and multiplied and became a dreadful mingling of wails and shrieks and shouts, as of a crowd of human beings in terrible agony. Sick with horror, my knees gave way and I sank to the floor, leaning upon my hands and gazing in fascinated terror at the white-hot vase. I felt my strength deserting me.

I became aware, suddenly, of something moving in the midst of that awful, livid flame. Some dark objects appeared to be tumbling into the seething heat, instantly to be eaten up by it, serving but to feed the incandescence to greater brilliancy. And one or two poor creatures, whatever they might be, were clinging to the slippery side of the vase, struggling frantically to mount up to the top of it; but always their hold was loosened, and they fell, crying hoarsely, down into the hellish mass below. And now I saw what they were. Men! I was looking at a miniature reproduction of some infernal scene—a molten hell, into which struggling and groaning men were helplessly falling, and being consumed and obliterated in the seething mass.

When Amelia let herself in the next morning, she found me in a faint upon the floor. I soon recovered beneath her ministrations, and at once my tired eyes sought the vase before the tall window. It stood there, sparkling against the blue sky beyond, chaste and beautiful. Surely, surely, I had not seen in it last night the dreadful scene which was etched upon my brain? Was I going insane? The fear of being considered so drove me to keep silent. I told Amelia I had come down for a book in the night, as I had been sleepless, and that I had stumbled against something in the dark and fallen down. But I looked so ill that, on her own initiative, she sent across for Doctor Pratt. She returned with the information that he was called out of town on a consultation over a very serious case, and that they expected he would be gone some days.

I REFUSED to have any other doctor attend me, and decided to take Stephen Pratt's advice and go away for awhile myself. I was beginning to fear I should go demented, if I did not compel myself to get away from the influence that that vase was exerting over my mind.

So I made arrangements for a long trip which would take me away for most of the summer and autumn.

As I closed my last grip and prepared to descend to the waiting taxi, the urge to take another look at the tall vase again swept over me. Hardly realizing what I was doing, I found myself making a place for the thing inside the top of my bag. Placing the bag on the hall chair, I started to turn the handle of the parlor door. Then

suddenly I became conscious of what I was about to do, and well I knew that if I took that dread thing with me, I might as well stay home for all the good my trip would do me. I would resist it. I *must* resist it. It was now or never. I would, by sheer force of will, snap this spell which held me.

Scarcely had I made the resolution, when I heard the shrill and prolonged ringing of the vase, from within the room. It was as if it had been struck by someone on the outside—or, by something alive and moving, clutching and struggling, on the *inside*. The ringing rose crescendo, and became a shrieking shout of horror.

"Amelia," I cried, almost wildly, "I don't want you to go into the parlor until I return. Understand me, Amelia—you are to come in and clean up the dust once a week as we arranged, in all the rooms except the parlor." Turning the key in the lock, I slipped it into my open bag, snapped the bag shut, and almost ran from the house. As I ran, that horrible wailing shout grew fainter.

As the taxi drove me away, I looked back and caught a glimpse of Amelia's face. Evidently she thought I was some Lady Bluebeard with a secret horror locked up in the parlor, for her eyes were rolling in their sockets, and her mouth agape. I venture to assert that no earthly persuasion would have coaxed her to open that parlor door. No doubt when she went in for the weekly cleaning, she ran past the locked room with many a frightened glance thrown over her shoulder.

Well—she could not have felt much worse than I did. In spite of the fact that I had won a temporary victory over the spell, I knew for a certainty that once I returned home it would again possess me. So I made up my mind to get myself in as fit a physical condition as possible while away, so that I might have more reserve strength to call on. For I resolved that, come what would, I would get to the bottom of that strange phenomenon when I returned.

I PROLONGED my trip as long as possible, and it was well into November when I came back. I arrived home just the day before Thanksgiving, having planned it that way so that I could call up a few old friends the next morning and get them to come over for Thanksgiving dinner. That, I thought, would start me off with some lively company, and take away the feeling of dread and desolation which always swept over me whenever my thoughts had dwelt upon my return.

Strong and browned though I looked, my heart gave a thump of anticipatory dread as I once more entered the hallway of my own home, and saw the tightly-closed parlor door. Amelia was there to greet me, and she had a good dinner ready, soon after which she betook herself to her own home. I thought of calling her back and asking her to stay in the house for the night, but shame at my timidity forbade it. So I let her go, and stood in the hall and watched the front door close behind her. Then a sense of terrible loneliness descended on me. I resolved to go straight up to bed and not unlock the parlor door until the morning—not, in fact, until I had called up my friends and obtained their promise to be with me that day. I would not then feel so alone.

I was soon in bed, but not to sleep. I lay wide awake, staring into the darkness. The old restlessness was upon me and the old urge to get up and go downstairs was sweeping over me in full force. And at last I felt compelled to give way to it. I arose and went downstairs, key in hand.

I turned the lock, opened the door, and stepped inside the room. And there I saw, directly opposite me, the dreadful miniature incandescent furnace in full blast, washing its deadly molten waves up against the sides of that strange vase.

"I am going to find out whether it is imaginary, or whether it is real liquid fire," I said to myself. But do not think I was so calm as my words sound. It seemed to me that a crisis of some kind was at hand, and that I should that night conquer this horrible thing which haunted me. Otherwise, it would forever conquer me, and hold me, until it burned into my brain and drove me mad.

I cast about for something indestructible, and my glance fell on the gleam of a metal paperknife on the center table. I advanced with this in my hand, and plunged it suddenly inside the vase. There was a crack and a splutter, as one gets from a defective electric wire, and the knife entirely disappeared. The ghastly incandescence was hideously intense in its heat. And now I noticed a change in what appeared to be the consistency of the vase. It began to widen and contract, looking, in the dark, like some terrible Eye, opening and closing upon me. And again those miniature human forms began to appear inside it, slipping and clinging, and always falling into the seething

hell with their dreadful groans. As the awful incandescent Eye expanded and contracted, the figures grew and diminished accordingly, now swelling large until I could see the agony in their faces, now shriveling small and wizened like faces in a nightmare. I uttered a wild shriek, and fell prone upon the floor. I was going insane—my brain was turning—Oh, my God, would I end my days in a madhouse?

I SHALL always think the striking of the clock saved my reason. It is a big old-fashioned clock, and I have always loved its mellow note. As the first stroke of midnight rang sonorously from behind its placid face, it seemed to bring a calming influence with it, so that my frenzy lessened and I was able to ask myself what the meaning of it all must be. Was the vase made of some kind of enchanted crystal, like the crystal ball of a medium, and was it depicting to me my future? Was it to be my fate to fall into some furnace or volcano, and die that dreadful death? But the figures seemed all to be of men. Was it then a warning to me of what would happen to any of my friends—perhaps my old kind friend Doctor Pratt? At this thought an added fear clutched me. Stephen sometimes experimented with strange drugs and gases—was this a forewarning of *his* fate—perhaps through some terrible explosion in his laboratory?

The last stroke of the clock had died away. A new day was beginning—Thanksgiving Day. As the last of the slow sound-waves ceased vibrating through the room, I noticed that the room was growing hot. I managed to get to my feet, a new fear sweeping through me. A suffocating heat was spreading itself from that lividly glowing vase. I stared at it in horror; for it had ceased to contract, and was now slowly and steadily expanding—swelling in a hideous wobbling manner like a bubble of deadly poison. The ghastly incandescence became more vivid and white-hot, the agonized faces grew larger and more terrible, and the groans and shouts were ringing through every corner of the room.

Larger and more awful the seething vase was growing—quivering as if the glass were in liquid form, and blown out, a molten bubble, by the pipe of a glass-blower. Was it glass, or—what else *could* the hideous-looking bulb be made of? Was the dreadful thing about to burst and choke me with its deadly fumes? I was faint with terror, but I could not move to run away. It seemed as if its magnetic power increased with its expansion, and held me.

Swelling and wavering in sickening undulations, the ghastly thing grew larger and hotter, seething and sizzling, until it seemed as if the very room were cracking and blistering with heat. I felt suffocated, parched and choked, and began to gasp for breath. I felt that if it grew one fraction worse I could not bear it, but must swoon, or die under the strain. Then suddenly there was a loud report, as of the simultaneous cracking of a hundred pistols: fiery, snake-like cracks ran up the distorted vase in all directions, like the jagged darts of summer lightning—and the next thing I knew was, that I had dropped upon the floor, and everything went suddenly black.

WHEN I recovered consciousness, Doctor Pratt was bending over me. Amelia had found me in the morning, lying in a faint, with bits of broken glass around me, and she had run across the road for the Doctor.

"The vase," were my first words—"is it broken?" and when he answered, "Yes," I said, "Thank God."

"What happened to you, Frances?" he asked me. "Can you recollect anything of last night?"

So I told him what had occurred. He looked grave, but incredulous.

"Your trip didn't do you much good," he said. "You know, Frances, I've been thinking while you were away that you need someone to look after you. Me, for instance. I've missed you, too, like hell. Shall we mend our broken compact, even though it's rather late in the day? Better late than never."

"We never had any compact," I replied, "but you were always too certain that we had. But I might consider it—except for one thing. I believe that vase must have been a sort of crystal, foretelling the future; and if it means that either you or I must end our lives in some dreadful manner, we had better not be thinking about anything so material as earthly marriage."

"Frances, you've been ill, that's all. You are, still. But if that idea of yours about the vase is going to stand between us, I'll run it down and find what, if anything, there is to it. And the first step is, to find out where the vase was made, and by whom, and what kind of stuff went into the construction of it."

He picked up a few of the larger pieces, one of them being the circular base, underneath which were some markings and letters.

"This will start me in the right direction," he said. And it did. From the markings he discovered that the vase had been made at a large glass-works in San Francisco. Thorough in all he did, as he always was, he made a special journey there, and by dint of persistent inquiry at last came upon an old man by the name of August Benderwold, called by all who knew him, "Augie." And old "Augie" related to him the following terrible facts:

On Thanksgiving Day, about the year 1898 or 1899, a big football game was being played between Stanford University and the University of California. The crowds were so immense that two or three hundred fellows climbed upon the near-by roof of a large glass-works, to get a good view of the game. Beneath them, in the building they sat on, were half a dozen large tanks which were full of seething, molten glass, kept at the terrific temperature of 3200 degrees Centigrade.

The works had been closed for the holiday, but on account of the difficulty of getting up the required temperature, the molten glass in the tanks was never allowed to cool. The roof of the building, dried and cracked by the continual heat from these tanks of incandescent fluid, gave way under the weight of the crowd. Terrified warning cries went up—too late. Twenty or thirty men fell through and disappeared.

THE first few of the men fell crashing upon the brick domes covering two of the tanks below, the impact of their fall breaking through the bricks, and killing some of the men. The others were bruised and maimed, and burnt by the spattering white-hot fluid, but managed to save themselves from dropping through into the seething hell within the tanks. The rest of the men, however, who followed, crashing through the roof above, found the gaping holes in the tank covers ready to receive them, dropped straight through, and slid, grabbing and clutching frantically for finger-hold, into the livid, blinding, white-hot maw. There was scarcely a moment's change in the appearance of the seething mass, so terrific was the live heat the human bodies met. A sudden ghastly puff of smoke, a passing whiff of burnt flesh and rags, and amid choked-off screams and groans, every living man who fell into those awful cauldrons was instantly cremated—and completely obliterated. Not a trace of one of them remained.

The old man who related this dreadful episode to the Doctor, was himself one of the first few men who had fallen in and smashed through the bricks, dropping off the curving dome of the tank instead of falling through. He still bore scars of the burns he had received, which he showed to the Doctor.

"AND that there mark," he said, pointing to the stamp upon the base of the broken vase which the Doctor showed him, "is a mold number. I can tell from that, just which particular batch of ware that vase belonged to. It was one of a special order, only a couple of gross of them were run off, and I know that they were made right after that accident, and from the very batch of glass that was in the tanks when the men fell in. When I was recovering from these here burns, and not able to blow glass, they put me on inspecting and packing, because I couldn't afford to be idle, and I helped to put up and send off that whole batch of ware for shipment."

And so (said Frances Lane, the lady of indeterminate age, as she swayed towards me with the rocking of the train) I always believe that, in an effort to escape their terrible fate, the spirits of those doomed men passed into that vase, which was perhaps the first one turned out from that batch which the old man said was made of the same molten mass which had consumed the men. And, when the vase broke, their spirits were liberated.

And I think it more than a mere strange coincidence, that the accident occurred on a Thanksgiving Day, and it was upon the dawn of Thanksgiving Day that the vase burst asunder.

Now I am on my way to Chicago to shop —for a pale gray dress and veil—white, I think, being too youthful for a woman of my age. You see, I feel that Stephen's success in solving the mystery of my macabre vase deserves—well, what *he* seems to consider an adequate reward.

But there is a horrible question which often arises in my mind—a question which I can never answer. It is this: what, really, was the seething mass in those two tanks composed of, after it had received and swallowed up its human victims? Had my vase been made of only glass, or—what?

Blood Brother to a Ghost

Can the living and the dead
love the same woman without treason?

By LANCE McCUMBER

As told to PAUL R. MILTON

I SAT benumbed—paralyzed by the significance of the message that had just been revealed to me. Those words that were written on my desk-top by the hand of the Beyond are graven on my brain this day as they were the second they finally vanished from my straining sight. Still I stared at the shiny surface, in which the radiance from the lamp behind me was softly reflected. From that very surface had just disappeared the last vestiges of the fateful words that meant then, and mean now, more than my life.

When Chester Johns and I, at the age of fifteen, our lips quivering, cut open the small veins in our right wrists and mixed the young red blood that oozed slowly out, we did not realize what we were doing. We knew only, in a childish adventurous way, that such was the accepted manner in which to swear blood brothership. We had read a romantic novel, dealing with the violent days of Louis the Thirteenth of France, in which two young nobles had sworn to be to each other more than brothers. It was life for life, and death for death. That was the impression made on our boyish minds. So, one fall morning with a tang in the air that made us fill our lungs with the breath of the New Hampshire hills, we had sneaked off from our farm work to a gully in the hills. There, with solemn faces, and hands that hesitated ever so little, we had each made an incision on the wrist. Quickly we had held the wrists together and sworn the vow that bound us inseparably. Knowing no other way, we had memorized the extravagant language of the times of Louis the Thirteenth from the novel, and quoted over, in voices that were barely beginning to take on manly sound, the phrases of the vow of blood brothership. Silently, awed even by doing what we did not fully understand, we had hastily bound up our wrists and walked slowly back to our work. We told no one of our action, though suspicious glances were cast at us at my home, and at Chester's, for the similarity of the wounds we said we had got in climbing over barbed wire.

It was not until we had graduated from

high school, and gone down to the State University together, that Chester Johns and I began to realize a little more what we had done. Summer vacations those years at college, we always went back to the farms our families owned in the northern part of New Hampshire, and thus managed to put aside a few dollars for the expenses of the winter. Thus we went along, smoothly, until the final year, when it developed that I had an excellent chance to win a scholarship that would send me to Paris for a year's study in architecture. I needed that year, because I longed to specialize in a certain type of French architecture. But it meant that absolutely every minute of my time would have to go into study. It meant that I would have to give up the small jobs, such as waiting on table, stoking furnace in two or three private houses, and so on, that I held to make ends meet. By this time our families were able to give us very little money, so that we had practically to earn every inch of our way through the last two years.

I realized I would have to tell Chester, so I explained fully my situation. He nodded.

"We can do it," he pronounced.

"*We* can do it!" I repeated. "Look here, Chet, if I devote every minute to work, I can't hold down the jobs I have. And if I give up the jobs, I won't be able to pay another week's rent. It's a fine fix to be in!"

SILENCE fell between us. Chester gazed thoughtfully at the book open in his lap, and I brooded bitterly on the injustices of a world that put opportunity in my grasp with one hand, and snatched it away with the other. Chester spoke.

"Listen, old man, I said *we* can do it, and that's what I mean. You just give up everything and double your studying time. Leave the rest to me."

I stared at him, amazed. In a sort of silly bewilderment I looked closely at his high, thin forehead, his brown, wavy hair, and into his serious brown-black eyes, to detect signs that he had gone out of his mind. But he grinned, sanely enough.

"Well," I retorted, "suppose I just go to classes, and spend all day long poring over books and a drawing board, what will I eat? Where will I sleep?" I slumped in my chair. "No. The year in Paris is too good a dream. We'll let it go."

Chester jumped up and stood, better than six feet tall, glaring down at me. "If you let this chance go by, I'll have nothing more to do with you. Remember—" and he became suddenly grave— "In solemn oath I swear——"

I jumped up myself. "What do you mean to do?"

"Just this: I will take over your jobs. I have time, and I guess I can stoke a furnace as well as you. In simplest terms, I will keep you running, and you get the scholarship."

"But—but—your own work?" I protested feebly. The idea he had just expressed overwhelmed me. Maybe the scholarship was yet within my reach!

Chester waved a slim hand. "I'm well fixed. Why shouldn't I contribute to your success?" he added, faintly jocular, though I knew that he had meant every word he uttered.

I tried to argue him out of it. I really feared for his health, for though apparently strong, he had little endurance. I dared not mention my real fears to him, however, for he furiously resented any reference to his lack of strength. Of course, the frankness which existed between us permitted me to own up freely to a great desire to let him do as he suggested. But I was suddenly haunted by a fear that I might not, after all, win the scholarship. But Chester prevailed. I consented.

I plunged into such work as I have never done before or since. Anxiously at first, I watched Chester. He became, at once, as busy as I. Weeks flew by, and I worked with even greater intensity. It meant more to me than anything else could possibly have done. Picture our joy, then—for Chester rejoiced as much as, if not more than, I—when I was notified that I had won!

Like idiots, we danced about our room.

We graduated, and returned home to the northern part of the State for a final visit. In the fall I sailed for Europe, and I did not see Chester Johns, my blood brother, for over a year.

Never, during my months of delightful work in Paris, did I forget that to Chester Johns belonged the credit for enabling me to get there. More than ever I felt, across all the distance that separated us, the bonds that linked us together. When, finally, I did return to New York, prepared to enter my profession of architect, I found that Chester had prospered during my absence. Though hardly out of college, he had made himself extremely valuable to his bond firm,

and his career was assured beyond a doubt.

No real opportunity ever offered itself for me to repay my debt to him. That was on my mind continually. As a matter of actual fact, I thought up at great length ways and means of some day fulfilling my resolve to return the good he had done me. I wished wholeheartedly for something to happen which would let me help him, let me make good on my vow of blood brothership. But nothing occurred except that we both received a considerable measure of success in our various fields. Chester became one of the most important men in his firm, and a man whom other firms sought. I, for my part, was astonished to find myself favored in great degree by the chief architect under whom I worked. He put many things in my path, and it is not immodesty on my part to say that I took advantage of the chances thus given me.

So things went until Chester was thirty-two and I just a few months younger. It was about this time that Chester was sent to California as manager of a branch office his firm opened there. He was sorry to go, and I knew that I would feel lost without him, but we both knew that it was an advance for him that no arguing could deny. He would have been a fool to turn it down. So he went, promising to return as soon as possible.

Very little time passed before he wrote me enthusiastically of a girl he had met; Patricia Fulton, her name was. The next letters admitted joyfully that he had fallen desperately in love. And then came the announcement of his wedding! Soon after, a telegram from Chester reported that he had been made a junior partner in the firm, and would be returning to New York to live within the month.

I met them on their arrival at Grand Central Terminal.

I DID not see them at first in the hastening crowd, but first heard Chester's voice in my ear: "Hello, hello, the wanderer has returned!"

I wheeled and grasped him by the hand. Phrases of welcome tumbled from my lips, so that I did not at once see the small, silent figure that regarded me gravely from his side. Then he waved his hand in her direction, and said:

"Mrs. Chester Johns!"

A small hand reached out toward me from his side, and I took it, hardly able to mask my interest and curiosity. Frankly she returned my rather foolish little smile, and murmured in a soft but clear tone: "I am very glad to meet my husband's dearest friend." Her large gray eyes dwelled on me with an expression that I could not fathom. I dropped her hand, and began telling Chester of the plans I had made for his return.

I looked upon Patricia Johns with some doubt, for no woman Chester could possibly have married would have won my instant approval. One evening, however, I had a conversation with her which is worth recording in the light of succeeding events. It was that night she won my frank admiration and trust. And it was that night which most often recurred to me at subsequent times.

I had gone up to their apartment where they were newly installed, and found her ready and dressed, while Chester had not yet returned from the office. She greeted me with a warm smile of welcome, and a murmured phrase. She never raised her voice, but was always clearly understandable. Her dark hair, worn long, outlined the contour of her head, and an evening dress of a cream-colored material I could not identify revealed the roundness of her arms, and the fine white texture of her skin. She indicated an easy chair, and moved an ash-tray slightly nearer my hand.

Her first words were: "It's very foolish for us to be calling each other by our last names. I am called Patricia!"

I opened my mouth to reply when she went on: "You, I know, are called Lance. Chester has spoken of you." She smiled to indicate that Chester must have filled her ears with tales of his and my early days in the hills of New Hampshire, our struggles in college, and our early adventures in New York.

"You have a great advantage over me . . . Patricia," I said after a pause. "You must know that I was very curious to learn what sort of woman you would turn out to be."

"You don't fully trust me," she said with keen insight, regarding me composedly with her grave eyes.

"It isn't up to me to trust or distrust you, Patricia. I only know," I continued boldly, "that you are entrusted with the happiness of a man who——"

"You think I don't realize that?" she inquired, speaking more loudly than I had ever heard her. I noticed her white bosom quicken the rhythm of its breathing, and her

fine nostrils distend ever so slightly. "You must understand," she pronounced, looking straight at me, "that I am his in every sense until he dies . . . Until he dies," she repeated.

I DID not remove my eyes from hers for a full five seconds, but that was more than enough time to convince me then that this was a woman of fine blood: a woman who, I felt in a flash, was more than worthy to hold in the cup of her little hand, the life and joy of Chester Johns. At that precise second the sound of his entrance into the apartment broke the tense thread of our thoughts. We rose smiling as he entered, and she walked over to him gravely to receive, and return, his kiss.

There was, after that, an understanding between Patricia and myself that gave me a sense of security. I looked upon their life together with the greatest pleasure, though never enviously. I regarded Patricia Johns as a newly added, but absolutely equal, member of our blood brotherhood. She was able to join the life we had led with no sense of ever having been left out of it.

Another factor which made it easier for me to join them frequently was her continual interest in my welfare that convinced me more firmly than ever that she felt and acquiesced in the bond which had so long existed between her husband and myself. Likewise, she never permitted me to forget that she and I understood one another. Her way was subtle, but I concluded that she entertained a real and earnest desire, amounting almost to a passion, to win the admiration of her husband's friend. So my sense of security in her was augmented.

But there still oppressed me the sense of unfulfilled obligation. Never had that subject been mentioned between us for years, and I know that Patricia never knew of it, for neither Chester nor myself had ever breathed a word.

The summer of their second year of marriage, Chester began slowly to show unmistakable signs of the strain imposed upon him by his responsibilities in business. He was becoming almost a wealthy man, and the worries of prominence in his field showed in his lessening strength, and a diminution of his old-time jocular manner. Accordingly, Patricia carried him off to the mountains for a month.

When they returned, I met them at the station. I was reminded, dimly, of the first time I had ever seen Patricia, though this time I caught sight of them first. But now his was the silent figure, tanned and grave, while hers advanced to me first, joyously. Her eyes held a gleam and her two small hands were extended for me to grasp. Quite unaffectedly, she turned up her face to be kissed. Quite as naturally, I kissed her on the lips, a kiss such as brother would have given sister.

But I never forgot the burning of her lips!

In a flash I felt that what was apparent to me must be apparent to Chester as well. I threw a swift glance at his face, smiling a greeting to me, and felt a surge of shame. With averted gaze, I left the station with them, never daring to look at either one.

At that time I had just finished work on the estate of the Farwell family, one of the most aristocratic in the environs of Boston. I had designed and supervised the construction of a country home, on the order of the houses erected by the French nobility of the later Eighteenth Century. The Farwells had expressed themselves as wonderfully well pleased with the home when completed, and had insisted on feeling themselves obligated to me. As a small token of their pleasure they had sent me three bottles of a certain very fine old brandy, that had reposed in their Boston cellar for many generations. I anticipated many pleasant tastes of a brandy unobtainable today. The three bottles were locked in a closet in my apartment.

IT was only with the greatest reluctance that I could bring myself to visit Chester and Patricia. Not that I did not want to; do not misunderstand. But since the precise moment at which Patricia and I had kissed one another, I had felt my danger in going near her. I felt, under Chester's eyes, that I was a thief, robbing him, unwillingly, of the dearest thing he possessed. For Patricia's kiss had not been that of innocence, but that of invitation, of love!

I did, despite my reluctance, see them several times immediately after their return, and passed every second in their company, in acute misery. One thought persisted in my mind: This was the way in which I was repaying my debt to Chester Johns!

One evening I arrived at their apartment to accompany them to dinner, when Patricia opened the door herself, her dark eyes carrying a look of concern. I greeted her casually, and passed her to enter the

living room, when I heard her murmur behind my back: "Chester is ill."

I spun around, my eyes wide and staring, for I knew what that meant. Chester had not, apparently, succeeded in throwing off the chronic weakness of his constitution. Little had seemed to be the matter with him, except a general let-down. But he had become listless, retaining only a faint vestige of his jocularity and gaiety.

I asked Patricia: "When did it happen?"

"He came home," she said in a low tone, looking at the door that led indirectly to his bedroom, "and complained of feeling all in. He lay down for a moment, and then I insisted on his getting into bed. Now he just stares at the ceiling."

"Let me speak to him," I suggested.

She smiled a short, swift smile, and wordlessly led me to him. He lay under a thin coverlet. The room was dim, lit only by a small boudoir lamp on a low table by his head. I thought him asleep until, at the sound of our entrance, he turned his head slowly to look at me. He grimaced.

"Here you see me, Lance. It's back."

I stood and looked down at him. "Badly?"

He grimaced again, deprecatingly. "You know what it is. Strength gone, all of a sudden!" He mumbled under his breath and then added loudly: "And I thought I was through with it!"

Patricia stepped softly past me, and laid her small hand on his brow. He looked up at her gratefully, while her face remained expressionless.

Three days later Chester Johns died, in the presence of Patricia, myself and two doctors. One of his hands was held by Patricia, the other lay loosely between mine. I wanted to cry out to him to stay, that there was something I had to do for him before he died, but my tongue stuck, and my throat dried up. I could only press his hand convulsively. His last words, muttered with a heart-rending echo of his characteristic way, were:

"We had a good time, though, didn't we, Pat? And Lance?"

He closed his eyes slowly, and the coverlet across his breast ceased to rise and fall.

I raised my eyes from his still face, and stared deep into the dark, gray gaze Patricia leveled at me. No tears came to her, but I saw the quivering of her lips, the stealthy wringing of her hands. I had a dim certainty that I was staring at her in horror—of what I do not know, and did not then—but it came home to me slowly, as I watched her for some sign that danger existed for us two who remained alive. But almost at once that feeling was overwhelmed by the realization that Chester Johns had died in the face of my unfulfilled debt to him.

TWO weeks passed, until one night to my astonishment, Patricia came to my apartment. I waited for her as she walked slowly but unhesitatingly into the middle of the room to take a chair. She was soberly dressed, but not in complete mourning.

"I've come to you as the only real friend I have, Lance," she said after a long silence during which I had watched her fumble uncertainly with the clasp on her small black handbag.

"You know that I'll do anything in the world for you," I replied sincerely. "What is it?"

She raised her head and looked at me. "I'm not asking any favors, Lance," she smiled faintly. "I just want to tell you a decision I've come to."

I cast swiftly about in my mind for an answer to the question that had haunted my mind ever since Chester's death: What was going to happen now to Patricia? She had, of course, more than enough money to live well the remainder of her life, and she did not lack for contacts and acquaintances who would be only too glad to make her life pleasurable.

"I'm going away," she announced in her low precise tone. "I'm going away, Lance, because there's no reason why I should stay in New York." Her eyes seemed to harbor an expression of expectancy, as if there were some particular thing she passionately desired me to say, or do. Furiously, my mind darted here and there for the key to that expression.

"I don't suppose there is," I mumbled, feeling at once that I had disappointed her.

"I know how you feel," she said intensely.

"About what?" I asked, surprised.

"About me." She uttered the words meaningly.

I began speaking aimlessly. "You know, Patricia, that you and I——" Then the answer struck me! What could have possessed me to forget, because of some momentary blind spot in my brain, the burning of her lips the one time we had kissed?

"Patricia!"

"Lance, don't be a fool!" she shot back sharply. "Can I help it, or could you? It had to happen. So what's the use of pretending to be horrified? . . . Lance, I can

tell you openly now that—that I love you!"

She crumpled suddenly in her chair, her hands flew to her face, and then she became motionless, as if struck to stone.

And God forgive me, I realized suddenly that I, too, was not blameless. I loved her! I knew in that awful moment that my soul was hers, had been from the very first. But fool that I was, fortunate fool, I had not known it until that night! My body ached with the pain of tense muscles, and my hands gripped insanely the edge of the table against which I was leaning.

I felt as if I were plunging, helpless, into a great roaring chasm. Yet, at the same time, I was acutely conscious of the dead silence which enveloped our two immobile figures like a smothering cloak.

Solid, ghastly minutes passed, and still we did not move. As from a great distance I saw the small figure of Patricia, her somber clothes intensifying the desolation expressed in every line of her as she sat bowed in the chair.

Then, slowly, as the thoughts rushed to my mind, one began to make itself clearer and clearer, to assert itself over the distracting din of the others. With full force it suddenly occupied my brain to the exclusion of everything else.

I THOUGHT: "This woman is Chester's wife! This woman is Chester's wife!"

I positively trembled when I saw her move her hands. They descended slowly into her lap, and her eyes, undimmed by weeping, turned to mine. At the sight of my face they flew wide open.

"Lance, what's the matter?" I heard her voice, it seemed, as if it were the echo of a desperate cry.

I advanced deliberately toward her. "The matter?" I repeated savagely. "Don't you realize what you've said, what you've done? I was Chester's blood brother—and Chester has died. You dare come to me and say that you love me! You dare to admit it? Couldn't you have kept silent? Why did you——"

The power of speech deserted me, and I stood before her frightened gaze, robbed of all will to act.

"Chester never knew!" Her voice trembled, but she continued, her shoulders straightening. "I know I shouldn't have spoken, but you knew already. You knew already!" She leaned slightly forward.

"I knew!" I repeated in horrified amazement. I leaned down toward her, fighting a desire to touch her. "Yes, I did know, but I would have said nothing. Never! Do you want me to be a traitor to—to whatever decency there is left in me now?" I straightened up and walked away from her. "But I admit that I have loved you, still love you!" An exclamation from her made me spin around. She had risen.

"But that does not make me wish to steal my friend's wife. Death has made no difference. I am still bound. Do you hear?" I knew I was raving, had practically lost control of any power of coherence.

"DEATH makes no difference!" She came over to me swiftly. "Do *you* know what you're saying, Lance? I was a good wife to Chester, and would have kept on, had he lived. Don't you know that?" she pleaded. "Do you think I didn't feel like a traitor every minute? But he never knew, never!" Her breast rose and fell rapidly, and she wrung her hands. We stood now almost face to face, and I hardly dared look into her eyes. Blood rushed to my face, and I cried out against my will: "Patricia, I *do* love you!"

Unaccountably, she took a step backward, and stared at me with furious intensity. Very slowly she uttered her next words: "I am going away, Lance, for six months or a year. When I return——"

"You shall not find me," I broke in roughly. "Can't you see?" I pleaded. "I will not see you again—ever! Chester was my friend—more than my friend! He died, leaving me to owe a great debt, one that I can never repay." I experienced a sweep of despair. "If I marry you, I must admit to myself that I was false to the dearest friend I ever had. False, a lying cheat! Even now I have been a coward. I should have gone from you long before. But I love you; I always will!" I stopped, blindly enraged.

She continued to stand mutely before me, her hands tightly, desperately clasped. A silence fell, unbearable, and she broke it. "You fool! You are throwing away a life's happiness for a vision. You can do nothing for Chester now. I made him happy while he was alive; I know that, but we are alive, Lance, alive! Don't you see what that means? We love each other, God knows! So why give it all up for the sake of something that has gone?" Her tone softened at the end.

I muttered: "Chester would know me for a contemptible cad." Then I added: "I

will never be false to him, even in death!"

Patricia turned swiftly about and walked away from me toward the door. There she turned, and I could see, as I gazed at her in silent despair, the pleading in her great, dark, gray eyes. She said: "When I walk out, Lance, I shall not come back." She waited, a few seconds, a few centuries, perhaps. Then I saw her vanish from before my straining sight like a wraith. She was gone!

It is hardly possible that now I should be able to convey the bleak, rending misery of the next hours. I felt worse than a condemned criminal must feel. No solace appeared for me, for I knew I would never forget. How many times did I rehearse, in aching thoughts, the touch of her hand, the softness of her lips that I knew from one kiss? On the screen of my distorted thoughts, she appeared before me, smiling slowly, or walking in gentle grace across a room. Insistently, the realization attacked me: she had gone and she would not return. I knew that she would not return! And I knew too well what I was: a liar, a coward, a cheat.

Later, I don't know how much later, a semblance of an ability to think rationally returned to me. I stared about the room, amazed that it should have retained its casual, everyday atmosphere in spite of the fateful events that had taken place there that very night. To shut its uncomforting aspect from me, mechanically I went about, putting out every light but the one which threw its soft radiance on the desk before which I then sat down.

NOW my mind seemed stunned. It occurred to me that a drink of some stimulant would help me to regain a grip on myself. I remembered the brandy presented to me by the Farwells when I had completed their home. Still mechanically, I unlocked the closet and brought forth one bottle. It was covered with the encrusted dirt of unnumbered years spent in the cellar of the Farwells' Boston home. They had told me that it had reposed there since some time previous to the Civil War. I walked back to get a small tumbler, and then returned to the desk. After opening the bottle, and throwing the pieces of decayed cork in the waste-basket, I poured out, with a hand that still trembled, a tumbler full of the thickish, clear amber fluid. I replaced the bottle on the desk, picked up the glass and raised it to my lips.

Suddenly, like a blow, a feeling of revulsion seized me, almost causing me to spill the contents of the glass. My hand steadied, and I raised the glass again. And again, more forcefully, the feeling of distaste, of revulsion, gripped me. And at the same time, I felt along my arm what seemed to my disordered senses the touch of a cool hand.

I swung my gaze down, but saw nothing. Placing the tumbler on a near-by table, I sat and stared at it, bewildered. As I gazed, spellbound, it moved! Not sideways, nor in the air, but tipping over. My heart leapt and pounded; my muscles became rigid. Slowly, as if moved by a deliberate hand, the tumbler tipped over with a faint tinkle, and the brandy spilt and ran stickily over the white cloth of the table.

I thought then that I had really gone out of my mind; that the ordeal through which I had passed with Patricia had driven sanity forever from me. Perfectly motionless, I watched the overturned glass and spilled liquid, perhaps expecting it to right itself again through some mysterious agency. As if impelled by a guiding finger, my thoughts swiftly concentrated on Chester Johns, blood brother of mine for all our lives. A ghastly desolation swept over me as I realized for the thousandth time since he had died, that never again would I see him. A poignant regret intensified my grief and I sank my head on my chest, forgetful of the overturned glass. How long I remained absorbed in a bottomless chasm of self-reproach, I don't know; but I heard, or thought I heard, a voice. I listened, without moving. Thus, with my faculties concentrated I heard nothing, but *felt* a call. I raised my eyes, and there, quietly standing opposite me on the other side of the table, I saw Chester Johns!

YOU will say that my unbalanced mind produced this hallucination, but I swear that it was not so. I know that it was the ghost of my dead friend. He stood still; the outlines of his figure, dressed as when I had last seen him well, were faintly blurred. I gazed at him in infinite astonishment for several seconds, and saw the characteristic faint smile on his face, before it dawned on me what had happened. I leapt to my feet, exclaiming: "Chester, you've come back!"

He nodded, and his hand pointed to the spilled brandy on the table. I looked down, uncomprehending. Then I saw what he

meant. On the sides of the glass had settled a white sediment. I gasped. Poison!

When I looked up at the silent ghost figure again, he nodded once more.

"You might better have let me die!" I exclaimed in a low voice.

His lips moved, but I heard no sound. "Chester, I can't hear you!" My voice broke. His pale face looked suddenly concerned, and he took a step nearer. His hands then indicated that I should watch his lips carefully, and thus understand what he was saying. I aimed all my strength at the task. His first words were, then:

"I am glad you tried to drink that poisoned brandy. Otherwise I should not have been able to attract your attention sufficiently to make you see me. I needed such a psychic crisis as the imminence of death to put us *en rapport*."

Then his pale gaze fastened more closely on me.

"What has happened to you, Lance?" My head dropped.

"You don't know?" I queried, lifting my eyes to his face, horrified. He shook his head.

I reached at that second the greatest depth of despair. No longer were Patricia's words valid: that Chester would never know. I saw that I must tell him!

"Chester," I began, "I was unworthy of your friendship. I have discovered that I —that I—love Patricia! And she says that she loves me, has done so for a long time!" I brought out the last guilty words in a rush. But I saw no change in Chester's face. The words seemed to mean nothing to him. "Chester, do you hear me? Do you understand what I said?"

He nodded, and his thin, fine lips framed the words: "I understand." Then he seemed to wait for me to go on. Hardly conscious of the phrases and sentences that stumbled from my lips, I recounted the scene that had passed between Patricia and myself just that night. I told him of my resolve never to see her again, and how she had left, comprehending finally that we were never to come together. I even referred to the debt I had always owed him, Chester, and railed bitterly at the fact that he had left the mortal world before I had been able to do anything in return.

Never was human being so taxed with his own shortcomings as was I that night. I had appointed the ghost of my friend as my judge. And I knew he would find me guilty!

At the end of the jumbled tale, I sank back in the chair. My eyes had never left Chester's pale countenance, which had shown no definite expression since I had begun to talk. His figure was faintly luminous to my sight, and had an air of unsubstantiality.

MY eyes dropped to his lips as I felt him about to speak. I saw: "You are foolish, Lance."

"You are trying to console me when you know my faults, Chester."

His head moved vigorously from side to side. His gaze became suddenly earnest. "Lance," he said, "by loving Patricia you are committing no crime. You could not help it!"

"Perhaps not, but I have no right to her love!"

"Do you imagine, Lance, that your loving one another in your mortal life can injure me, who am far beyond? Do you suppose that the joy of the great love I bore her in life can be taken from me, or the memory of it? It is different here, Lance!"

What was he saying?

"You and I were blood brothers in life, Lance, and it matters very little that you deem yourself in my debt. Had I not the knowledge that I contributed, even if very little, to the success of your life? And my dearest wish then, as now in this far better life beyond mortal life, is to see you and Patricia happy."

I protested miserably: "You don't understand. If Patricia and I were to pass the rest of our lives together, it would mean the utmost unhappiness. I can't bring myself to steal the love that rightfully belongs to you, even in death."

"Don't say 'death', Lance," he smiled. "I cannot make you understand, perhaps, that here, in the life beyond mortal life, there is far more happiness than where you are. It is our task to make the mortal life easier, more filled with joy. Can you realize that?"

Then his lips moved very rapidly. He seemed to speak in great excitement, but I could not make out what he said. I strained but could gain no inkling of what he was saying. He sensed it at once, and without further ado, moved around to the desk at one side. He leaned over it and with his finger wrote on the shiny wood. As he wrote the words flamed out in a ghostly radiance, and I could read as his finger moved across the surface!

These were the words I read: "The hap-

piness of yourself and Patricia is my most treasured goal. Go to her, I command you!" Riveted into immobility by the meaning of those few words, written in letters of immortal power, I watched the ghostly finger of my dead friend come to the end of the sentence. My soul drank in their import and I sat, until the touch of a cool hand on my shoulder made me look up. With that characteristic wave of his hand that I had so loved in life, the ghost of Chester Johns vanished!

MY eyes shot back to the desk top to see the last vestiges of his fateful words disappear. But they were written forever on my heart. *"The happiness of yourself and Patricia is my most treasured goal. Go to her, I command you!"*

Need I tell how, like a half-crazed man reprieved from an unjust death, I rushed out of the building, forgetful of hat or coat, and ran through the deserted streets? Of how when Patricia saw me, she opened her arms, her dark gray eyes glistening with tears? I said no word, but held her to me, rejoiced and secure in the knowledge that I was doing right.

When I could bring myself to it, I told Patricia of Chester's return to me, and I repeated to her his command. She asked no questions, but looked at me quietly, with understanding. I took her hand, and I know that she, as well as I, felt the cool touch of an invisible hand, that joined us for life-long happiness.

One other point must be explained: that of the poisoned brandy. I communicated with the Farwells, which I thought best, telling them of my accidental discovery of the poison.

In a letter expressing the greatest concern and alarm, they explained that they thought they had removed all the poisoned bottles from their cellar. An early member of the family, I learned, had kept such a store of poisoned liquor for dealings with the dishonest fur traders of eastern Canada. They had, they had thought, removed every dangerous bottle, but the one they had given me had obviously escaped their vigilance.

But for Chester Johns, I should have died that night, losing the great boon he was able to confer upon me. My greatest joy, outside the love of Patricia, is the knowledge that the avenue to the repayment of my twofold debt to Chester Johns is not closed. Patricia and I know that we three shall meet in the glorious future in a life beyond mortal life.

The Ghost *that* Wore Handcuffs

THE late Camille Flammarion, a noted figure among Continental scientists for more than fifty years and one of the world's leading authorities on psychic research for a long time, accepted the existence of spirits in haunted houses as proved.

Among the numerous stories of "haunts" which he has written, one concerns a fine dwelling in the southern portion of France which none would occupy because it long had been reported that a ghost was in possession of the place. A professor of psychology—determined to learn the facts—arranged to spend a night in the place. He took with him several books and a lamp to help him remain awake.

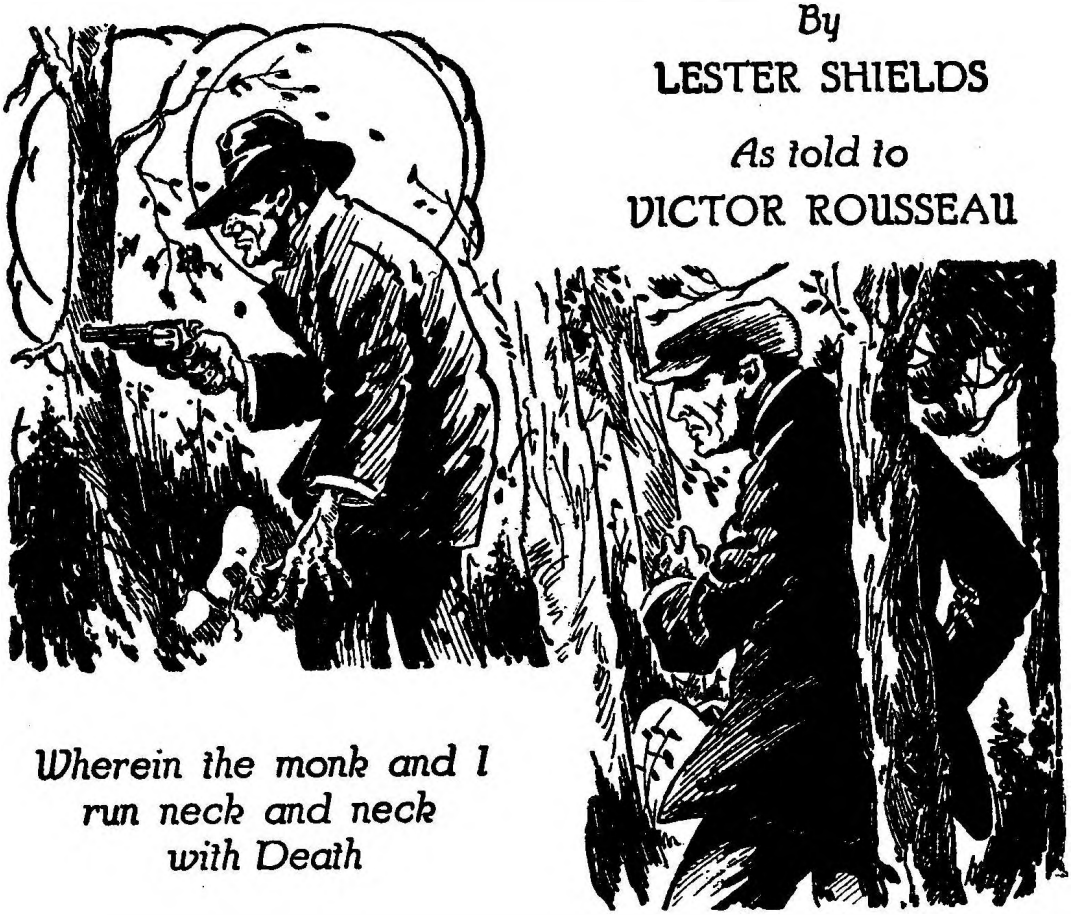
Until midnight, no sound broke the stillness of the house. Soon thereafter, however, he heard the rattle of chains, but pretended he had not noted it and continued reading. The intruder came nearer, making a fearful racket with the manacles. Obviously it had come through a closed and locked door of the room. The man of science looked up and saw a specter, heavily chained, which disappeared immediately after shaking its hands with a despairing gesture.

Soon he heard the sound of rattling metal outside and, looking from a window, again saw the phantom, which vanished between two large trees. Next day, he obtained permission of the authorities to dig in the yard, and when an excavation was made between the trees, a skeleton in chains was uncovered. The chains were removed and the skeleton buried with the usual honors accorded the dead. The identity of the skeleton was not discovered, but the ghost never again troubled the house.

The Prisoner of LIFE

By
LESTER SHIELDS

As told to
VICTOR ROUSSEAU



Wherein the monk and I run neck and neck with Death

HENRY RYCROFT was a Southern millionaire, art collector and owner of cotton mills, and I was a poor clerk in his employ. Rycroft trusted me; I even helped him unpack the pyx, or casket, containing the historic carbuncle that his French representatives had obtained for him. But when I dared to love Pam, his only child, he opened the vials of his wrath upon me. And Pam refused to marry me, though she swore she would always love me.

Desperate, I went abroad, and enlisted in the British Army during the War. Chance brought me to the church of St. Sulpice, from which the carbuncle had been stolen. There I was accosted by an aged monk, who bewailed its loss, and, before letting me depart, insisted on giving me a drink of a rare cordial concealed in a wall of the crypt. Hardly had we left the church when the monk was blown to pieces by a German shell before my eyes.

After the War, I returned to find the stately Rycroft home a burned ruin. An old negress, Aunt Susy, told me that Rycroft had become bankrupt, had set fire to his home, and had taken his own life, when the police came to arrest him upon a charge of fraud. I recalled then that the monk had told me that the carbuncle brought disaster to its owners.

Pam, who was living with Aunt Susy, recognized me, and clung to me, but I saw that she was not mentally herself, and after a while she did not seem to know me.

That night, believing that she had drugged me, Aunt Susy left her cabin with Pam. I traced them to the ruined mansion, where I saw them, with a mulatto boy, participating in a seance. The room was lit by a single candle, and I crept to the door, to obtain a clearer view. The awful sight I witnessed overcame my self-restraint. I was about to leap into the room when a hand fell on my shoulder like a clamp of iron.

I whirled around. Dumfounded, I discov-

ered at my side the old monk whom I had seen blown into eternity by the German shell in the market-place in front of St. Sulpice church!

WHO was he? Was he spirit or flesh, and how had he come there? My knees began to fail me; for a moment, the horror being perpetrated within the reception-room was almost obliterated.

But he was a man. There was no mistaking that! And there was a kindliness in the wise old eyes that convinced me that I had nothing to fear from him.

"Stop! Do nothing rash! You are fighting forces more powerful than you imagine, and you will need all your wit and courage!" came from the old man's lips.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" I stammered.

"I am your friend. I have come here to help you. But I shall give the signal when we are ready. Watch, restrain yourself, and be silent!"

Impelled by the monk's commanding gesture, I turned my eyes toward the room again. When I had last stood there, that evening I had said good-by to Pam, it had been filled with pictures and rare trophies. There had been costly furniture, and rich rugs underfoot. The sight of the bare, fire-blackened stones, with crumbled mortar underfoot, filled me with deep pity for the wretched man who had fallen from such heights to a self-inflicted death.

THEN I saw something that had somehow escaped my notice when I stood outside the window. I have mentioned that Rycroft had had a secret receptacle made in the wall of the room, to hold the pyx and the carbuncle. Now, as I crouched, looking in, I was amazed to see that the chest was there, in an orifice immediately beside the séance-table.

The light of the candle shone dimly on the tarnished filigree and the ivory receptacle. And through the glass front I could see the great carbuncle, glowing as if it were illumined by an interior light of its own.

Rays of richest red shone through the antique glass, streaming upon Pam's white face, and converting her cheek to glowing fire.

Of course, I had no means of knowing how long the séance had been in progress, but apparently it had not been more than a few minutes, for as I lurked there I saw something that may be said to mark the beginning of every table séance. Yet its very grotesqueness seemed to add the last touch of horror to the gruesomeness of the scene.

For the table was beginning to tilt and sway, and presently, after a step or two to the right and left, it began to dance an awful sort of two-step!

There was no possibility of mistaking that! One might say that it would be impossible for a table to give such an impression, and yet the tilting, tripping, mincing step was exactly as if it were that of some cheap, underbred dance-hall lounger careening with a girl of his kind in his arms.

Satanic, of course! And I remembered hearing an occultist say once that, whatever the Devil is, he is no gentleman. There is always an element of vulgarity about his performances that gives him away.

Next, to my horror, I saw Pam rise slowly from her chair and begin to sway in unison with the table.

I caught my breath at the awful sight, at the look of ecstasy that had replaced the white mask of Pam's face. This was not Pam, but something unspeakably evil.

The red rays of the great carbuncle had increased in luster; they seemed to light the room, blotting out the little yellow gleam of the candle. They seemed to follow Pam as she swayed, as if they were a red spotlight following a dancer.

Then, as the woman and the table swayed, alternately approaching and receding from each other, as if they were participants in an old-fashioned minuet, suddenly the table settled back to its old position. Pam was dancing alone.

Alone, and yet I felt—there is no other way in which I can describe it—I felt as if some evil force that had possessed the table had left it and was approaching Pam.

It was as if it had used the table to gather power, and now, having been able to discard it, was manifesting on its own account.

And Pam—merciful heaven!—Pam was looking at something invisible to me, and smiling to it!

THAT hideous sight will be ingrained in my memory forever—the old negress, with the rapt look upon her vicious face, the half-witted mulatto, sunken back in his chair, and breathing stertorously, and curiously shriveled, and Pam, curtseying now to what seemed emptiness, with the red glow

of the carbuncle on her weirdly eager face.

Emptiness? No! For where had been only darkness, something like denser darkness seemed to be forming.

Can darkness be relative? Can there be qualities and degrees of darkness? I am sure that the intense dark of a starless, moonless midnight could not have been so dark as that patch of blackness that was forming opposite Pam.

It moved! It came into the rays of the red carbuncle. *And it was taking form!* I felt that I was going mad as I saw those wreathing clouds of mist, shot through with iridescence, swirling and sifting through the ruby light.

I felt as if all the deviltry of the Pit had been unleashed, and was at large in that room. Phantom shapes seemed to hover in the air. Was it the sound of the blood that surged madly through my veins and arteries, or was it the whispers and the low, mocking tittering of the damned I heard?

It was condensing now, that grisly shadow forming in front of Pam—condensing into human form, cutting off the candle light. It was becoming the silhouette of a man.

I had never seen a materialization, never believed in its possibility. Yet the infernal powers of the mulatto, shrunken in the chair, had evoked something that had not been in the room before. And of a sudden the shape became recognizable.

I clamped my teeth upon my lips to keep from screaming. That shape was the shape of the man whom I had seen accost Pam on the road that afternoon!

It was impossible for me to be mistaken. It was forming beneath my eyes, not a wan ghost, but living flesh and blood. And I saw once more the face, beautiful in its diabolism, with all the pride of Lucifer.

Sheer horror rooted me to the spot! For Pam saw it—and welcomed it! Pam, in her entranced condition, was curtseying and smiling toward the apparition, and there was even a touch of coquetry in her gesture, as she offered her arms, in the way a girl stands when she is prepared to dance.

I remember the thought that flashed through my mind: "I shall wait until it has become wholly flesh and blood, and then I shall rush forward and grind the infernal life out of it with my heels before it has a chance to dematerialize."

But the Thing was not yet entirely human. In the light that streamed from the red carbuncle I could see that its development appeared to be arrested. It was almost as if the power of the medium were not quite sufficient to enable it to become wholly human, for a tenuous cord of white ectoplasm united it to the mulatto's breast, from which it had doubtless issued. And, though the front and face were fully formed, there was a gap at the back, covered with swirling draperies of a cloudy white.

But Pam's face—Pam's face! I could bear the sight of that inviting smile of hers no longer. I heard the monk's voice hissing in my ears. But from within the room came Pam's soft and melodious laughter, and something in my brain seemed to give. I tore myself from the monk's restraining grasp.

THE Thing was almost entirely materialized now. And Pam was walking toward it, laughing, her arms extended invitingly. The old negress was chuckling like a fiend let loose from hell. And the cord of ectoplasm was no longer visible!

For an instant longer, sheer horror palsied me. Then, even as the old monk grasped at my shoulder once again, I flung him from me as if he had been a child, and leaped into the room.

With three bounds, I had interposed my body between the Thing and Pam, just as she was about to fall into its arms.

Instantly, the candle was extinguished. I heard the old crone's scream of baffled rage, and Pam's own cry of terror. For one moment, by the red light that streamed from the carbuncle, I saw Pam's face, and even in that instant my heart beat with suffocating joy. For that was the real Pam, my Pam, as she had been for a little while the afternoon before, when she had clung to me.

And with that, a furious strength and courage came to me. For I knew that the real Pam was mine, as she had sworn she would always be, and that this girl who had laughed and held out her arms invitingly to that foul phantom was a devil that had taken possession of her.

I grasped for Pam, missed her, and found myself groping in utter darkness. The light of the carbuncle had suddenly gone out.

Then I recoiled from something lithe, sinuous and resilient—and cold and clammy as a snake. A form of rubber it might have been. Again and again, I dashed my fists into that horrid, yielding, and yet unassailable form, only to be hurled back. I heard shuffling and stumbling in the room; and in terror that they were carrying Pam away,

I tried to force my way to the spot where I supposed she was, when something soft and loathsome closed about my body.

Arms? Yes, arms, but they were more like the tentacles of an octopus. Arms whose very touch filled me with indescribable horror, creeping up my body until the fingers clutched my throat! But now I was no longer conscious of any arms or parts; it was like a cold, clammy cloud that was slowly crushing the life out of me.

I dimly heard the old crone screaming, somewhere up the road. I put forth a last effort. I felt my senses leaving me.

Then of a sudden, the Thing was gone, and I was reeling back, partly conscious, into two strong arms that held and supported me.

Only for a few moments did I remain in that state of torpor. I had shaken it off before the crone had ceased to scream. Everything was as black as pitch, but I heard the monk's voice in my ear:

"They've taken it—the carbuncle. I was too late. I only got here a minute before you did. Fool that I am; I should have rushed in and seized it, but I did not know what part you were playing till I saw the look in your eyes, and I underestimated the strength of that evil spirit. You love her, do you not? Then we shall save her; but first the stone, on which everything depends."

"No, Pam first!" I cried, still not quite free of my stupor.

"With the carbuncle in our possession, everything is ours. Come, you are yourself now! Which way have they gone?"

"Up the road!" I cried. "To the negro cabin! They'll have the carbuncle there. And Pam——"

BUT already he was dragging me out of the room. Once outside, we ran together through the moonlight in the direction of the cabin. We were nearing it when there sounded shouts along the road, and a party of negroes burst into sight, carrying pitchforks and shotguns. The yells grew louder at the sight of us.

One of the men raised his gun and fired pointblank at my companion. It seemed to me that the discharge must have entered his body, and yet the next moment he appeared uninjured.

Behind the negroes I saw the old crone—and Pam!

"Hold them!" screeched Aunt Susy. "Those are them what attacked Miss Pam tonight. They're fiends! She'll tell you!"

"Yes, that one, that one!" cried Pam in a frenzy, pointing to me, her face distorted with mockery and malice.

At this, all desire to resist seemed to leave me. I ceased to fight, and in an instant I was in the grip of two burly blacks.

What happened, I do not know, but with a sudden screech of pain or terror my captors released me and staggered back. Next moment, to my amazement, they had taken to their heels, bellowing with terror.

I was about to run toward Pam when the monk caught me by the arm.

"This way!" he cried. "This way! Leave her! You cannot help her now, and you will lose her forever if you try to go to her!"

The strange power that seemed to emanate from the monk was stronger than my will. In spite of my despair about Pam, I suffered him to draw me away. Together we plunged into a thicket of dense water-oak, hurrying along a trail that diverged from the main road toward the mountain.

We were not a moment too soon, for more negroes were coming up from the scattered cabins all about, and we could hear their yells on every side of us.

IN a few minutes, however, it was clear that we had succeeded in making our escape. I stopped, breathless, and faced my companion. I noticed now for the first time that he was dressed as a common laboring man, instead of in the white robes. And my mind began to come back to normal.

"I'm not going to run away," I protested. "Pam is in danger—grave danger."

"I know it," he answered. "Do you think I crossed the sea without understanding the magnitude of the issues? They are bigger, far bigger than you understand. That is why we must be prudent. I have a cabin on the mountain, where I have been hiding for days, waiting to discover the location of the stone."

"The stone! Always the stone!" I said contemptuously. "Don't you understand that Pam's very soul is in danger? I'm going back, unless you give me some good reason for running away."

"You don't understand," he cried. "That stone—there are devils in hell and others in human form who are bent upon obtaining it. If you go back, you will be seized and lynched. She herself denounced you. She is in their power, she does not know what she is doing. But there is still time, if you will work with me."

I was still looking at him when suddenly the hue and cry broke out behind us. Mingled with the distant shouting, there came an eerie sound that made my blood run cold. For a moment I did not know what it was; I thought it was a wolf somewhere on the mountain side.

But then I knew, and a shiver of fear ran through me. It was the baying of a bloodhound.

Another took up the call, and the shouts of our pursuers, trailing us through the brush, grew still more audible.

"Come," cried my companion impatiently, "will you work with me, or will you go back to your ruin, and sacrifice her to your own obstinacy?"

"I'll come with you," I answered.

"There is a stream up the mountain. If we can make it, we can hope to shake off the dogs. They'll lose the scent in the water. But there's no time to waste."

It was evident that there was no time, for our pursuers could not have been more than a quarter of a mile behind us. And louder, deeper, came the baying of the hounds upon our trail.

NO one who has not had that experience can imagine the sense of horror that such a pursuit conveys. The knowledge that one is being tracked down by a sense hardly developed in man, that of smell, produces a feeling of despair. I am not ashamed to say that I became a victim of a sort of blind panic. I scrambled along the trail in the wake of the monk, who moved as alertly as if he had been a youth. I broke through clumps of thorny undergrowth, and was unconscious of my bleeding hands and face. Upward, ever upward, we struggled, until at length we had passed through the belt of forest at the base of the mountain and emerged upon comparatively open ground.

Above us towered the great face of Bald Man, with patches of forest here and there, out of which the great dome of the summit emerged, shaped like a human head. Deep crevices and gullies, wooded ravines and heaped-up boulders afforded ample cover, but the place at which we had emerged was an open, almost flat plateau, perhaps six hundred yards in width. And overhead the full moon shone down, making the land as bright as day.

Hardly had we issued from the undergrowth when a renewed outburst of yelling, startlingly near at hand, indicated that we were discovered. And from a half dozen throats broke out once more the mellow challenge of the dogs.

We were too exhausted and winded to speak. The monk pointed across the plateau. I gasped something in reply, and we set off again at the top of our speed. I heard the trickling of water. We reached the other side of the open ground just as our pursuers burst out upon the plateau, and we plunged into a tangle of almost impenetrable wild laurel and rhododendron. A moment later, I felt soft ground beneath my feet, and then I almost fell into a clear little stream that ran purling down from the mountain overhead.

The monk turned downstream, and we waded among the rocks, while the river bed turned and twisted, so that in a minute or two we had almost boxed the compass. I heard the yelling now to the right, now to the left of us, but it was clear, both from the nature of the sounds, and from the fact that it came no nearer, that the dogs were temporarily baffled. At a flat stone ledge from which a little trail ran upward, the monk signed to me to leave the water. I sprang ashore, set one foot upon the ledge; it toppled over, precipitating me back into the stream. As I sought to rise, an agonizing pain shot through my leg. I realized that I had sprained my ankle, if not broken it.

The monk evidently understood, for without a word he came running back, stooped, and raised me in his strong arms as easily as if I had been a child, and began carrying me along the trail, ignoring my protests.

The trail grew very steep, but though he breathed hard, he did not falter in his stride. After he had covered a distance of about a quarter of a mile, a clearing appeared before us, with a small, abandoned cabin standing between two tall pines. The monk carried me inside and laid me down.

I could still hear the shouting in the distance, but it seemed very far away. For the time being, we seemed to have shaken our pursuers off the trail.

THE interior of the cabin was quite bare, save for a bed of pine boughs, on which the monk laid me down. He pulled up the leg of my trousers and took off my shoe and sock, then began examining the injury.

"The bone is not broken," he muttered, running his fingers deftly over the swollen flesh, "but it is a bad sprain. It is unfortunate. Still, they ought not to find us here. And now—that minute that I lost tonight

will mean a long and stern chase. Still, the stars favor us and promise success in the end. I cast that horoscope well. I cannot have been mistaken. But it told of suffering and sorrow, and——"

"Listen to me!" I interrupted. "I have obeyed your instructions tonight. I have made myself a fugitive when there was nothing to fear. Now I insist that you tell me who you are, how you came here, and how you escaped death from the German shell. If you are in quest of the carbuncle, the proper course to have taken would have been through the courts."

He was binding my foot with a strip of cloth that he had torn from a scapular which he wore over his shoulders, and he seemed to heed my petulant questioning no more than if I had been a querulous child.

"In heaven's name, who are you?" I cried.

He finished the bandaging, then raised his head and looked at me. I could see his face clearly in the moonlight. Creased with innumerable wrinkles, it looked that of a very aged man. I remembered his monologue in the church. He had spoken of scenes in history that had happened centuries before, as if he had been a witness of them. A thrill of awe came over me.

Was this man in some way superior to ordinary men? Had he some mysterious power that had enabled him to survive the centuries, as he seemed to have survived the shell which had apparently dismembered him?

"You shall know who I am," he answered solemnly. "But you will not believe me till a worse thing comes upon you."

"I'll believe as much as I can," I answered.

"My name," he said, "is Bungay—Friar Bungay, if you wish, although it is many years since I was a member of my Order. Does that mean anything to you?"

"No," I returned frankly. "I have never heard that name before."

He smiled. "Yet it has gone down in history," he rejoined. "Now I shall tell you—more than you will believe."

THE story that he unfolded was so stupendous that, even much later in my acquaintance with him, there were times when I believed that I had been deluded by a madman, a fanatic, or a charlatan.

Had my schooling been a little better, I should have remembered the name Bungay as that of the friar who was associated with the great Roger Bacon in all his famous experiments.

Roger Bacon, the most illustrious name of the Thirteenth Century, the discoverer of gunpowder and magnifying glasses, the delver into Arabic manuscripts, the first European to write on optics, the man whose researches in the field of chemistry brought him under suspicion of trafficking with the Evil One! The man who is alleged to have wasted unprofitable years in his vain search for the elixir of life, which confers the gift of immortality, and for the philosopher's stone, which turns baser metals into gold!

And this man claimed to be Bungay, the friar, whose name is as inseparably linked with that of Roger Bacon as the name of Friar Tuck is linked with that of Robin Hood! No wonder he had told me that I should not believe him!

CALMLY, my extraordinary companion asseverated that Bacon's quest for both these secrets had been rewarded with success. But after that, he was no longer calm. His eyes flashed, his whole personality seemed to be charged with some magnetic force as he recounted the discovery.

"When the Saturn, the black powder, changed to white, and then to the red," he cried, "we knew that the secret of the stone was ours. That was the great carbuncle, which, heated to an inconceivable degree, together with certain ingredients, will turn the baser metals to gold."

"The carbuncle—in the pyx? Rycroft's stone?" I cried.

"The stone he stole, as many had stolen it before him," answered Bungay. "By its means, the Fuggers became kings of finance in the Sixteenth Century, as Jacques Coeur had before them. But always it has brought ruin, and always it has come back to its resting-place.

"When my master had tested the stone, and knew for certain that it was what he had sought so long, he did not know to what use to put it. He was old and wise, and he knew that gold is the source of all evil in human affairs. At last he entrusted it to me, to be deposited in the crypt of the church at St. Sulpice, where was a branch of our Order."

"And the elixir?" I cried.

"I am coming to that," answered Bungay. "Together we had sat all night over our brew in the great cauldron, watching it change from inky black to white, and then to a pale amber. At last, at dawn, it

lay before us, pale as molten gold. Our experiments had told us that by certain tests it could be known infallibly whether or not it conferred the gift of immortality. Those tests were met."

Suddenly, Bungay leaped to his feet, his arms upstretched. "I deceived my master," he cried in impassioned tones. "He had sought the elixir in obedience to that impulse that drove him to seek the solution of every unknown problem, but he had hardly dared hope for success. When the elixir lay before us, he regretted that he had entered upon the quest for it. The philosopher's stone he believed that he might some day put to the service of humanity, but the elixir he would not use. He called it impious, and would have dashed the cauldron to the floor, if I had not forcibly restrained him.

"AT last, I succeeded in persuading him that some day, under circumstances unguessed at then, the need for it might arise. He consented in the end that it should be poured into a flask, and deposited in the crypt, near the stone. But he would not drink of it himself, and he exacted an oath of me upon the sacred relics that I would not partake of it either.

"Three days afterward, he was arrested upon the charge of sorcery. No sooner had the guards led him away, than I rushed to the crypt, opened the flask and drank a full measure of the draught. Next day, a body of armed men burst into my room, to take me as a fellow of my master's. I slew three of them with my sword, received a score of mortal wounds, and escaped unharmed."

It would be impossible to overestimate the vehemence of the monk's words. I listened spellbound as he continued:

"I knew then that I was immortal. Since then, I have died a dozen deaths, but always the wounded flesh and broken bones have reunited immediately. And, my friend, my master's prophecy of evil came true, for with this gift at my disposal I gave myself up wholly to wickedness. I served the Satanic powers. I was at one time a boon companion of the black magician who has survived in legend under the name of Faust. That was more than two hundred years after I had first drunk of the elixir.

"It was the awful fate that befell him that changed me. I repented, and resolved to devote my life to making atonement for my crimes. My master had been released from prison in his old age, but his mind was enfeebled, and he never sought to punish me for my treachery. Often since his death I have endeavored to enter into communication with him and obtain forgiveness, but he has advanced to spheres too high for me to find him.

"And yet there was some error in that final compounding, perhaps due to the impurity of some of the ingredients, for the elixir does not wholly bestow the boon of immortality. Once in each score of years it is necessary to drink of it. Twice, in fact, I came within an inch of death, when the potency was almost gone out of me, and I was unaware of it. I believe that the impurity is in the black sediment at the bottom of the flask, of which one must be careful not to partake. Time and again, I have sought to make a fresh compounding; but it was the very error that gave us both success and failure, and I have never succeeded in duplicating the elixir."

"But you gave me to drink of it!" I cried, "Why? What was I to you?"

"It had been revealed to me that the soldier whom I should meet in the church that day possessed the secret of the stolen stone. When you denied all knowledge of it, I gave you a draught, that you might not die in the war. You may thank the elixir for your recovery after you were blown to pieces by that shell."

"Blown to pieces?" I shouted.

"Even as I was, Friend. But instantly the shattered members reunited, each in its place."

I HAD listened to Bungay's wild story with increasing stupefaction. So real did it seem, perhaps because his voice and manner carried conviction, that I had almost believed him. But now the reaction came. I saw Bungay's eyes cloud.

"You do not believe me, and I said you would not," declared the monk softly, "and yet you will believe before the sun rises again."

"How can I believe a story so preposterous as that?" I demanded querulously.

"Your foot—does it still pain you?" Bungay removed the bandage, and I stood up. To my surprise, the swelling had disappeared, and the foot, which had pained me so that I had been unable to rest my weight upon it, was as well as it had ever been in my life.

"No, you've cured it," I answered.

"Say rather the virtue of the elixir."

"Suppose all that's true," I cried, "what

are we going to do? What is the use of waiting here, when the hue and cry has lost us, with Pam in the power of that fiend?"

"Have patience!"

"How long?"

"By daylight you will be convinced," said Bungay again. "You will doubt no longer. You——"

But hardly had the words left his lips when a sudden yell of fury broke through the woods. Across the little open space, I saw a dozen men running, with pistols in their hands.

"Here they are, fellers!" shouted the man at their head. "I knowed they'd make for Hickman's cabin. We got you now!"

In a moment, they had broken into the shack and dragged us forth.

These were not negroes, but white men, armed with pistols and rifles, white men of the stern, implacable breed that the mountains raise. Looking into their grim faces, seeing their enforced restraint, I knew that we had little to hope for from them.

We were dragged into the center of the open space and ringed by our captors.

"Well, we got you fellers," said the leader. "I guess thar ain't no mistake. You're the fellers that's ben chasin' women on the road these two months past, and you did that job over to Suncliff. And Miss Rycroft's identified you. So that's enough. Got anything to say before we swing you off?"

I knew now of a certainty that our very minutes were numbered. The coolness, the constraint, of our captors bespoke their grim determination. I glanced at the monk and caught an extraordinary glance from him. There seemed to be some message conveyed in that glance. "Let them do their worst," he seemed to say. "They cannot harm us."

I felt that message, but I was resolved to make a fight for life. "My name's Shields," I said. "I used to live in Effingwell. Maybe some of you remember me. I am a discharged army officer. I only got back to Effingwell yesterday. They can prove that statement at the station. You can't hang me without at least investigating what I'm telling you. And my friend came back from France with me," I lied, determined to shield Bungay.

At this a yell went up. "You're lyin'," bawled the leader of the gang. "That finishes you. That old feller's ben lyin' up on Bald Man fer a week past. He's ben seen by half a dozen people."

"Yeh, Feller, you shore put yore foot into it thar," grinned another.

The leader nodded grimly. "I guess he signed and sealed his own death warrant when he said that. Anyways, we'll take a chanst we got the right fellers. If thar's any mistake ben made, we'll apolergize to their corpses—arterward. Git busy, boys!"

HALF of them precipitated themselves upon me, half upon the monk. We were dragged in different directions. Ropes were produced, and we were quickly trussed. One end of a longer rope was thrown over a projecting branch of a tall pine that stood on the east side of the cabin, and my captors dragged me toward it.

I knew that they intended to hang us, one to either of the two pines, and our chances of escaping appeared to me to be absolutely nil. I was filled with bitter anger against the old fool who had led me into this deathtrap.

My feeling against him was so savage that it almost obliterated the fear of death. The realization that Pam was lost to me forever, that she was destined to become the prey of the devils who held her in thrall, broke down my self-control. I shook my fists and raved and shouted, while the posse, thinking my nerve had broken, grinned with ferocious glee.

Meanwhile Bungay, on the other side of the cabin, was standing calmly beneath the pine that grew there, while his captors adjusted the rope about his neck.

"Jest cut that out and try to act like a man," snarled one of the men who held me, administering a savage kick. "The old feller over thar's got sand enough to take his medicine, and I guess you kin take yours the same way."

The rope was knotted about me; a loop was made, and fastened about my neck, the knot resting beneath my ear. With my legs tied together, and my arms strapped to my sides, I was powerless to attempt the least resistance.

As I stood there, I heard shouts break out on the other side of the cabin. Then, to my horror, above the log walls, I saw something rising slowly into the air.

It was the body of the monk, dangling horribly from the rope. Straight up it ascended, as the posse pulled, until it hung a few inches below the bough. Bungay was not struggling; he appeared to have died instantaneously.

Yelling bloodthirstily, the posse emptied their revolvers into the motionless form, riddling it again and again. It hung there from the bending bough like some horrible scarecrow.

At that sight, my anger vanished. The realization that the same awful fate awaited me, and that in a few moments more I, too, would be dangling from a bough, seemed to kill all emotion. Pam, the carbuncle, and the monk's fantastic story became like something I had read in a book in the long ago.

And with the calmness that often comes at the last, I nerved myself for my own supreme moment.

"HEY, what you fellers gapin' at? Touch this one off, right away. We can't stay here till mornin'," shouted the leader of the posse.

The men who had held me, ready to swing me off, had turned, and had been staring at the body of Bungay. Now, at their leader's shout, they transferred their attention to me again.

"Say yore prayers, Feller," grinned one of them, as he patted the knot beneath my ear, to assure himself that it was tight. "You're goin' to trip it on the air. Guess you won't go frightenin' no more women. Ready?" He glanced at the leader. "Then up she goes!"

The next instant, I was jerked violently upward. I felt the ground disappear beneath my feet, and reached for it frantically. An awful constriction of the throat shut out the air. Unconsciousness was rushing over me. "I'm being hanged," I thought. "This is what it feels like, then."

And it is extraordinary that the thought which occupied my mind at that last moment was of the strangeness of my fate.

A rushing sea was in my ears, and I had practically ceased to breathe, but I had no consciousness of pain. I had heard that hanging was by no means a painful death, but I had supposed that this was due to the quick ending caused by the disarticulation of the cervical vertebrae. Yet here I was, strangling to death, and I felt little physical suffering.

I had only an infinite regret for the blind chance of life that had cut me off from Pam at the moment when I had so nearly regained her—pity, and horror for the fate awaiting her; and a sense of the ludicrous futility of the same blind chance that had brought me unscathed through so many daily perils overseas, only that I might die a shameful death at the hands of this howling mob.

I could see nothing, but I could still hear their shouts beneath:

"He's dancin'. Dance, Feller, dance! Give him the whole floor! Pull, Fellers, pull!"

And, long later: "She's thar! Hold her, Fellers, hold her!"

With that I seemed to know that I had reached the projecting bough. And the blackness that had been rushing in upon me now seemed to enter and fill me, blotting out everything.

Then slowly consciousness began to come back to me. I was again aware of my body, and the constriction about my throat. I felt the intolerable pangs of the returning circulation. I drew in a deep breath. I could not understand what was happening to me, but I knew that I was still alive.

I could see and hear again, and through my half-closed eyes I saw my murderers below, thronging together in the moonlight, and staring up at me. I seemed to gather that they were convinced I was dead. But something had upset their calculations, for I had never felt so much alive before.

I was alive, through some accident that I must try to figure out later! Meanwhile my subconscious was telegraphing me an emphatic warning:

"Don't move. Don't let them guess that you're alive! It's your one chance now, your one chance!"

THEN I thought I understood what had happened. The constriction about my neck had almost ceased, and it seemed as if I were suspended from the shoulders rather than by the hangman's knot. I must have been jerked up so swiftly that I had survived the process of constriction, and—as it seemed to me—a projecting spike of living wood, invisible from below, had caught my coat between the shoulders, easing the pressure on my throat.

From the position in which I hung, this spike must have been invisible to the mob below, for they continued to stare up at me, their upturned faces bestial with the bloodlust as the moonlight played upon them.

"He's gone quick, like the other one. He ain't kickin' no more," I heard one of them remark.

Across the low roof of the shack I could see Bungay suspended from his bough, which was almost upon a level with my own. He

was not more than fifteen yards away, and the body was revolving slowly as the rope twisted and untwisted, like a revolving spit. The eyes were wide open, they gleamed in the moonlight, and the pupils, which should have been invisible in a dead man, appeared, fixed upon my own, as if with a light of awful intelligence.

I shuddered as a new sense of horror rushed over me. Was I destined to hang like that, circling among the trees, and swayed by every gust of wind?

"Yeh, I guess he's gone. Well, let's let in a little ventilation," shouted the leader of the mob.

They pulled their guns and busied themselves reloading them. And now I realized that I had escaped death in one awful form only to meet it in another. The miracle that had saved me from strangulation could hardly operate, in another form, to save me from those menacing revolver barrels.

LEFT alone, it seemed to me that I might somehow have succeeded in freeing myself from the rope; it was a desperate hope, but not entirely beyond the bounds of feasibility. But I could see nothing but stark, menacing death awaiting me now.

A dozen revolvers were pointing up at me. I clenched my fists, gritted my teeth, and waited.

The stunning roar of the discharge echoed in my ears. I felt the sharp pain of the bullets as they pierced my flesh. They hummed like angry bees around me. Clipped leaves and twigs flew into my face. And yet—I was not dead.

"Give him some more, Fellers!"

A second volley roared, and then came the isolated popping of the revolvers. The whole mob were emptying their weapons at me. I must have been struck in twenty places. And yet no vital spot seemed to have been pierced, for I still lived.

I still lived, though intolerable agony was racking my whole being. Again and again, I felt the brutal impact of the bullets. Could a man suffer such pain as that and live?

But I was dying at last. I knew it. I felt the life-blood gushing out of my wounds, as water runs from an open tap. My head dropped forward upon my breast. Again I felt that onrush of unconsciousness, like a great sea.

My last thought was of Pam, but it was emotionless as the thought of a discarnate spirit must be. Nothing mattered any more.

And with a tired sigh I surrendered myself into the compassionate arms of death.

When I awoke, it was at first impossible to believe that I was still in this life. For, with the first stirring of consciousness, memory came rushing back. I recalled everything, my hanging, the shock of the murderous bullets.

And yet here I was, in the world again, lying upon a shelf of rock high up on the mountain side, with the precipice beneath. And the newly risen sun was shining over Bald Man and the valley beneath, and illumining the roofs of Effingwell, far in the distance.

Something was over me, something that had come between me and the sun, shutting it off. I made a feeble, petulant movement of my hand.

I heard a voice, and then, opening my eyes wider, I made out the face of Bungay, looking into mine.

I gasped with incredulity; something like terror shook me, as I looked into the face of the man whom I had last seen revolving slowly from a bough, with a rope about his neck.

"Hush!" whispered Bungay. "Thank God, my friend! I was afraid at first, when you lay there so white and bloodless, that the tissues refused to pour out the new blood needed—afraid that the potency of the drug had been dissipated by your experience with the German shell. But my fears were groundless, though for a few moments it was touch and go with you. Now you are no longer immune against death, until you shall have drunk again of the elixir. No, do not ask me questions yet," he went on sternly, as I began to mumble. "I told you that you should be convinced before daylight, and I knew that this thing was bound to come upon us.

"Suffice it that you are recovering, and, best of all, we can now take up our work in safety, for if they return for our bodies, and fail to find them, they will suppose that somebody cut them down and removed them, to hide the evidences of the crime. Sleep now, my friend, and we will talk when you awaken."

I WAS still too weak to do anything but obey. I closed my eyes, and instantly sank back into profound unconsciousness. I must have slept the clock around, for I awoke to find the sun in the same position as before.

This time I was alone. I sat up, and discovered that my strength had come back

to me. I looked about me. The shelf of rock, high up on the face of the precipice, was protected from rain by an overhanging ledge, and it was evident that Bungay had reserved this place for a last refuge, since I saw a quantity of provisions stored in the cave.

I stood upon my feet. I found myself still a little weak and dizzy, but the feeling quickly passed away. As I stood there, Bungay came in, carrying a kettle of water which he had drawn from a spring.

He looked at me keenly, then, setting down the kettle, clasped my hands impulsively. "Do you believe now—do you believe, Shields?"

I looked back at him, incapable of answer. Did I believe? Could I believe such a fantastic story as he had told me, in the light of the still more fantastic thing that had happened to me?

Without waiting for my answer, Bungay set about the preparation of an aromatic brew, resembling neither tea nor coffee, but infinitely refreshing and invigorating.

"It is an ancient Arabian concoction, now forgotten," he explained, "and was discovered by my master from the reading of an old Arabic manuscript. Yet it is the least of the many boons he gave the world, and half of them are only being rediscovered today."

We sat down on the ledge together, looking out across the valley. But for my anxiety about Pam, I should have felt supremely happy. The terrible ordeal through which I had passed had receded in a curious way into the background of my consciousness.

Bungay turned to me. "I see that you still do not believe, Shields," he said. He spoke softly, almost wistfully.

"I wish I could believe," I burst out, ashamed of my own scepticism. "But how can I believe without some proof, some evidence?"

"Open your shirt," said Bungay gently.

I had not noticed my shirt, but now, looking down at it, I saw that it was all crumpled, and yet clean, as if it had been washed without a subsequent ironing. There was a faint coloring to it, too, a tinge of rusty pink, more apparent in some parts than others.

Then I perceived that my clothes bore the same appearance as my shirt too. They had been washed, and were badly wrinkled, and the color seemed to be queerly faded.

And then I knew what this meant. While I lay unconscious, Bungay had washed the blood stains from my clothes.

"I see you understand," said the monk, still speaking in the same wistful tone. "But open your shirt, Shields, and look at your body."

Wondering, I obeyed him. I uttered an exclamation of dismay at what I saw. For my whole body was pitted—there can be no other word—with small scars the size of the blunt end of a lead-pencil. Red scars, most of them were, and looking as if they had recently healed, but some were already turning white.

"In three days more, there will be no trace or sign of your wounds," said the monk.

"My wounds?" I blurted out, not yet quite realizing what the scars meant.

"The bullets of the posse," said the monk, touching my breast. "See, two of them passed clean through the heart. Nevertheless, you are alive today, and as well as you will ever be. Only, remember, the potency of the elixir is ended. Run no more risks till you have once more drunk of it."

I looked at Bungay; I looked down at my scars again. Almost under my gaze, the red seemed to be changing to white. I had imagined that in some miraculous manner I had escaped the bullets of the posse with nothing worse than a few flesh wounds, but at the sight of these scars my doubts were dissipated.

Fantastically impossible as the monk's story seemed, I knew that it must be true.

"When the posse had gone," continued Bungay, "I cut my rope with a knife that I had concealed about me, dropped to earth unscathed, then cut you down. Surely now you believe?"

"Yes, I believe," I cried. "I must believe!"

Who is the evil spirit that seems to have got Pam into his power? Lester Shields, still dazed by Bungay's revelation, does not yet guess at the stupendous forces for evil that the carbuncle has unlocked. In the next instalment of this story begins the death-fight between the good and evil forces, with Pam as a stake, in addition to the stone. Don't miss this amazing tale in the October GHOST STORIES. *On all news stands August 23rd.*

The Vigil

By

RAYMOND C. HARGRAVE

As told to

HAROLD STANDISH CORBIN

SINCE the gruesome adventure that befell Betty and me on that horrible night in the little Connecticut farming town of Dornham, I have made an extensive study of spiders and their habits and have come across some extremely interesting and parallel cases. The first is recited by a certain Mr. White, an English gentleman, who on September 21, 1741, said that on arising early and going out for a romp with his dogs he found the fields "so matted over with a thick coat of cobwebs . . . that the whole face of the country seemed, as it were, covered with two or three setting-nets drawn one over another. When the dogs attempted to hunt, their eyes were so blinded and hoodwinked that they could not proceed, but were obliged to lie down and scrape the incumbrances from their faces with their forefeet."

The London *Times* of October 9, 1826, records a similar phenomenon near Liverpool and reports: "The fields and roads were covered with a light, filmy substance which by many persons was mistaken for cotton . . . Every tree, lamp post or other projecting body had arrested a portion of it . . . The substance so abundant in quantity was the gossamer of the garden or field spider, often met with in fine weather in the country and of which, according to Buffon, it would take 663,552 spiders to produce a single pound."

The story of my own weird experience follows.

Old Roger Sloane was an evil man and he died an evil death. Widows on whose small farms he held large mortgages breathed a sigh of relief. At last there would be respite from his sudden shadow appearing before their doors and from his angry denunciations and threats. And as for the farmers who had come within his clutches and whom he milked dry of the smallest financial pittance, their joy was openly outspoken.

"GOOD riddance of the devil's disciple," they all agreed, and they blessed the spider that had dropped from the eaves of his ramshackle old house, where he lived alone, and had bitten him so that the wound became infected and he died.

Nearly everyone in Dornham attended the funeral—some horrid fascination drew them all to the church. Perhaps it was a strange desire to be assured that the tall, gaunt, vengeful man was really helpless in death. At any rate, in all the crowd no relative was present, nor was a single tear shed. Instead, there were grim looks of satisfaction on most of the faces.

I was only a child at the time, and I remember that my father took me by the hand, but he would not let me look at the corpse as we passed by the crude wooden box. So I have no distinct recollection of the man, though I had heard a hundred stories about his pitiless meannesses, great and small.

But I do remember that the clergyman's voice broke in the middle of the commitment service and he could not go on. It was the hand of God, some devout souls asserted, for it had been whispered about that Sloane

of the Spiders

The young artist took a terrible chance in living near the haunted Sloane farm. But strange friends came to her aid

was a murderer and there were stories about an affair with a farmer's lovely and innocent daughter who had been forced into an infamous bargain, in order to save her father from paupers' imprisonment. And though she died by no direct act of his, it was said he hounded her so and made her life so miserable that she ended it all by leaping from a great granite cliff.

They did not bury him in the consecrated ground at the rear of the village church, but bore his body to a grave that had been dug on the hillside of his own farm. It was close under a huge overhanging ledge that seemed forever on the point of breaking off and rushing down in a landslide that would overwhelm the valley below.

There, for many years, the body moldered, the wind moaning above the spot, the winter storms concealing it under a white coverlet, the summer attempting to hide it with tall grass, until the name of Roger Sloane should be blotted out from all record. Eventually the rude marker above the grave was toppled over by the frost, and the grave itself overgrown with chestnuts and birches.

IN those years I grew to man's estate and by certain persuasion was made to attend the Dornham school until I went into the village lawyer's office to "read law." In those years my father, who was a farmer like most of the people in the community, died. I lived with my mother on the old homestead and in the course of time passed the State bar examination and became a full-fledged lawyer. But to piece out my small income from legal fees, I turned to handling real estate. It wasn't much of a business, for to Dornham people one farm was as profitless as another and they did not change. But there came a time when sales increased bountifully for me because of an influx of outsiders who flocked to the community.

THE Connecticut State Board of Agriculture had compiled a list of old deserted farms throughout the State, in an effort to rehabilitate them—trusting that a description of certain advantages they possessed might attract persons to take them up again.

The plan worked in an unlooked-for way. Searching for quaintness, certain New York artists discovered that the hills and valleys of Dornham were beautiful. The farms, with their forlorn but antique buildings, suddenly became manors and studios. Barns that had housed generations of workworn horses and disgruntled cattle were transformed almost overnight by skylights and casement windows. Where old Brindle Bess had ruminated despondently on her cud, easels were set up, while flower boxes fronted the ancient mangers.

"Them artists is the craziest people ever there was," came the verdict of the Dornhamites.

This was all good business for me. Old farms were selling like whips at a country fair. I set aside my legal practice to give more time to real estate. And among the "foreigners" was one who was not so crazy. She was a girl—a delight to anybody's vision, most especially to mine.

She was as tall as my shoulder, and her

eyes, soft and velvety brown, gazed at you with laughter like flashing ripples in shadowed pools. She was as lithe and supple as an alder bough and she could be serious in a serious moment or laugh with infectious mirth at a clean and piquant jest. I am sure I stared at her with open-mouth admiration when she came to my dusty little office in the village.

"You advertise a farm called the Smithers place," she said abruptly. "I'm an artist and I'd like to see it with a view to buying."

"Certainly," I said, attempting to assume my best business manner. "The old Smithers place is next to my mother's farm. It has a splendid view, is equipped with buildings in fair condition, and has a clear, cold spring piped to the house."

SHORTLY, we were in my car and at the farm. She was delighted with the property.

I took her to Mother's for dinner, and the two women seemed instantly to become attached to each other and vowed they would be neighbors on more than speaking terms.

I felt an unwonted thrill as she affixed her signature, Elizabeth Farnsworth, to the deed I had ready. Afterward, though she had told me to get her back to the village in time for the Hartford train, I almost had to tear her away from Mother, and the tales of the neighborhood she began to relate.

"Wasn't that exciting about that old man Sloane?" the girl exclaimed, on the way to the village. "What a horrible way for him to live—and how much more horrible to die! Your mother said he had the farm just beyond mine."

"Oh," I replied casually, "this country is full of such tales."

"But they fascinate me," she cried. "It makes me shudder to think about that old man buried up there on the hill, his grave all overgrown with weeds and the stone tumbled down. If my aunt weren't coming to keep me company, I know I would imagine his ghost wandering past my windows on windy nights."

"Well, if you ever feel that way too strongly," I returned, "don't hesitate to come over to the house. Mother would be glad. I have to be away some and she doesn't always care for the company of Albert Volney, our hired man. She says Albert is honest enough and strong enough, but his brain is all in his muscles."

She laughed—a musical, silvery laugh—and sprang out of my car to dash for the train, promising to return shortly and establish herself.

IT was several weeks later that a strange thing occurred.

I sat in my office, checking over a few delayed details. The soft, mellow darkness of late June had come and the sweet odor of dew on growing things in field and wood drifted in at the window. Night insects had begun their chorus, and their cheery song made everything seem peaceful and good. I looked up a moment from my figures to think what a pleasant little hamlet Dornham had become. At that moment the sudden jangling of my telephone aroused me with a start.

The voice, as I answered, was rasping and hoarse—as thin as the sound of squeaking harness.

"I've been looking over the old Sloane place today, young man," the voice came peremptorily over the wire. "I wish to lease it. If you will meet me there in half an hour with a legal paper, I'll sign immediately."

"Very well," I said. "Who are you, please?"

There was no response. The line was suddenly dead.

"Hello! Hello!" I called.

Still there was no answer and I jiggled the hook. Minnie Brams, the night operator in our exchange, broke in.

"What is it, Ray? What's the trouble?" she called.

"I was talking with someone a minute ago," I explained petulantly. "You cut me off. Where did that call come from, Minnie?"

She laughed. "Wake up, Ray," she chided. "There wasn't any call from anywhere. Your line has been out of order for the last fifteen minutes."

"Out of order!" I shouted. "Why, I was talking——"

"You were dreaming," she cut in. "There wasn't anybody. I'm making out a trouble report now."

Mechanically I hung up the receiver. Dreaming? Could I possibly have been? I was positive I had been talking to someone—someone with a thin, rasping voice. As I thought of the voice I had a strange, sudden feeling of coldness.

I couldn't understand the thing at all. Who would want to rent the Sloane place? The buildings were in utter disrepair, for

no one had occupied it since Sloane died, and though it was practically worthless, the town had taken the title to it because of unpaid taxes. Waiting only to see whether some artist would buy it during this boom, the selectmen had voted to seed it in pine trees unless a lease was signed within the year.

HALF an hour passed. I frowned. The caller had said to meet him in half an hour at the Sloane place. What the devil——

I shrugged my shoulders. Minnie must have been right, of course. But perhaps there was a mistake. Since the old Sloane place was only half a mile beyond my own home, I could easily run out and see whether or not I had been dreaming.

When I stepped into my car, a full moon was riding high in the heavens and the night was as gentle and sweet as a woman's caress. But I did not heed it. An uncanny feeling made me nervous and out of sorts. I stepped on the accelerator and drove faster than was my habit.

As I swung into the lane that approached the old tumble-down farmhouse where the miser had died so long before, I caught a faint glow of light from one of the windows. That set me on edge. What was this, I asked myself—a hold-up? Some chicanery? There was something mighty queer about it! I suppressed another shudder. The shadows at the sides of the lane seemed to be closing in on me. I turned on my full headlights and let my motor race just for the companionship of the noise.

But the light was there, sure enough! In the window, I could now make out an ancient oil lamp on a rickety table—one of the few bits of broken furniture remaining in the house.

There was a vague figure beyond it, sitting against the far wall. I stopped and stared through the window before I knocked, but I could see little because of the lamp near the pane.

So I went to the door and though it swung forward and back on crazy hinges, I rapped long and loud, more to get up my ebbing courage than to announce my arrival.

"Come in!"

It was the same thin, squeaky voice I had heard over the telephone when Minnie Brams had insisted there was no call!

I stopped and tried to swallow the lump in my throat. I felt the hair rising on my scalp.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" the voice squeaked querulously.

Chagrined, I entered what had once been the great kitchen of the house. And there I saw the strangest person I ever set eyes upon! He was tall and angular, as he sat at the end of the room. Garbed in black, his figure was hardly discernible against the shadows of the room. He was gray and cadaverous as to face, and his eyes seemed unusually bright. He did not rise but sat there, one long leg crossed over the other. Instantly I became aware of a foul musty odor that I put down to the rotting structure of the house.

As I stood there staring at the figure, the thin voice rasped snarlingly at me again.

"None of your smart sales talk to me, young man," it said. "I looked this place over at my leisure and I know what I want. Got the lease ready?"

Again a queer, unexplainable sense of fear swept over me.

ALTHOUGH the figure in the darkness beyond me was speaking, yet the voice seemed to come from around me, above me, from all sides, without any one focusing point.

I drew a legal form from my pocket, spread it upon the table and unscrewed my fountain pen.

"Sign here," I pointed, striving to suppress another shudder as the figure arose and glided, without the slightest sound of footsteps, to the table beside me.

The scratching of the pen broke the silence. But I could hardly suppress an exclamation of surprise as I looked at the signature. I bent closer to the lamp, afraid to trust my eyes. Yet there it was:

R. Sloane.

I gulped and straightened. The figure had moved farther back into the shadows, and below the burning eyes a sneering smile played over the ghastly features.

"Good heavens!" I exploded. "Roger Sloane! That's the name of the man who lived here years ago—whose grave is up there on the hillside. Are—are you a relative?"

"No, damn it, no!" came the voice. "No relative."

"But the name—it—it's a coincidence. It's queer!"

"What's so damn queer about that? Ain't Roger a common name? Ain't Sloane common, too? What's so queer about putting 'em together? I'm willing to pay you the

rent without kickin', ain't I? Well, what else do you want?"

Before I could speak, he suddenly offered me a sheaf of currency. Even in the half-darkness I could see the bills were old, worn, dirty and—I thought—mildewed, as though they had been long concealed in a damp place.

I took them. The horrid, musty odor was growing stronger and I wanted to be out of the house. I crushed the bills into my pocket, bade the figure good night and hurried to my car. Just as a boy whistles shrilly and loud as he passes a cemetery at night, so I raced my motor again all the way up the lane. And arriving at the highway I drove home as though all the fiends of the devil were after me.

I did not sleep well that night. Strange phantasms came to me in my dreams. The bearded skull-like face of that strange figure at the Sloane place kept appearing to me. He seemed to walk up the side of my house without regard to any law of gravitation, to grin through the window of my bedroom at me, to come in and search my clothes until he found that sheaf of bills. Then it seemed he came to the edge of my bed and looked sneeringly down at me, and afterward went out of the window, to walk down the side of the house and disappear in the darkness.

It was a horrible nightmare and when I awoke in the morning unrefreshed, I went at once to my coat. The lease he had signed, with the name of R. Sloane upon it, was there—but the bills were gone!

Cold sweat broke out on me. Again a shudder passed over me, though it was broad daylight. I ran to the window and peered down. Of course, there was no sign of what I looked for, and after a moment I gave myself a mental spanking and told myself I had dropped the bills in my silly haste to get away from the Sloane farm.

AT breakfast with my mother and Albert Volney I was uncommunicative enough and Mother ventured the remark that I was working too hard. But I passed that off and announced I was going early to my office.

Yet when I got into the yard I could not help thinking about the lost money. I searched inside my car in vain, and then decided to go back to the Sloane house to look for it. I thought about the horrible old man and a sudden desire seized me to see how he looked in the daylight. I started for the farm.

It was a short walk. Quickly I was in the lane. I followed the tracks of my car and found the place where I had parked it—but saw no trace of the money. I could plainly see my footprints going up to the door. The house was a four-square old structure, built around a chimney, like many of the old-time Connecticut farmhouses. Its ridgepole sagged; its upper story seemed ready to crash in on the lower floor and the whole topple into the cellar. Why anybody should want to take that house was more than I could see. Before me the door swung idly as on the previous night and again I rapped long and loud.

There was no response. Nor did my repeated knockings bring any sign of the new occupant.

At last I entered the house, calling out as I did.

The place was deserted. The lamp, extinguished, still stood on the table. In the dust I could see the marks left by the lease, and near by the prints of my fingers where I had rested my hand. But on the side where the gaunt figure had stood, the dust was undisturbed!

Again that feeling of terror came over me and I thought as before that the musty odor became stronger. The room seemed deathly cold. I gazed at the broken bits of furniture, the broken window panes, the idly swinging door—and suddenly I bolted from the house, leaping over the vines that cluttered the steps, pushing my way through the long grass of the path, running like a frightened youngster. And as I turned up the lane, tumbling over myself, it seemed as though thin, eerie laughter floated after me.

But half-way to my home was a far brighter spot than I had left. It was where Betty Farnsworth lived—the old Smithers place. She had repainted the house—not with the ludicrous futuristic stripes affected by some of the artists, but a cheerful white with green blinds, and the barn, turned into her studio, was a good, old-fashioned red.

I was tempted to stop—a mere neighborly call, of course—and I yielded to the temptation. I might as well confess I had done it before—often. Already I had made friends with her aunt, a delightful little old lady who also had struck up an acquaintance with my mother.

As I mounted the porch, I stopped for a moment to listen in amazement to the sound of a violin played so beautifully that it was like remembered ecstasy. I did not know this, too, was an accomplishment of Betty's. My hand, raised to knock, was stayed—and

in that posture I remained until the violin ceased and Betty herself came running to the door.

"Why, Ray," she called gaily, "would you like me to paint you in that position? We could call it 'Opportunity — About to Knock.'"

"Gosh," I said in embarrassment, "I didn't know you could play, Betty."

"What you men don't know about us women!" she exclaimed, tossing her brown locks pertly and squinching her nose at me in the most delightful way.

"But if you care to see something strange," she went on, "come out to the studio with me. Just a moment until I get my violin."

AN instant later she was leading the way to the studio, her body moving with the supple grace of a goddess.

She mounted to the upper story where her workshop was, and threw open all the windows. The morning sunlight was soft and golden, glinting in the waves of her dark hair, turning it to bronze.

"Sit down there," she said, pointing to a chair. "Keep very quiet and watch."

I did as she ordered.

She caught up her violin and lightly drew the bow. At first, the music was soft and entrancing. Then it turned into some sort of jolly jig tune—and, again, it was wooing, calling. She had placed me at some distance from her, and now I saw a queer thing was happening.

From nowhere, yet everywhere, hundreds of black and brown spiders were collecting in the room. More and more were coming. Hundreds more. They were small but they all ran hurriedly.

I stared at them in amazement, but they took no notice of me.

Betty's music now was crooning. And quickly, as meticulously as though someone had drawn a chalk mark on the floor, the spiders arranged themselves in a perfect circle around her chair at a distance of perhaps a yard.

Suddenly the music ceased. She looked over at me and laughed. But the spiders stood there respectfully as though waiting for a continuance of the concert.

"They're field spiders," Betty said, after a moment. "I think they come from the long grass down in the old pasture beyond the orchard. They come in the windows. They heard me playing one day and all came in just as they did a minute ago. If I don't play any more, they'll all go away soon."

"But aren't you afraid of them?" I asked.

"I was, at first. But I call them my audience now. They're so friendly. Look. They must go back to work now."

Almost in the twinkling of an eye the circle broke, dispersed, and before we could realize it the spiders were gone.

"My little pets!" blithesome Betty exclaimed, laughing. "They're so well mannered, so appreciative! They never talk while I'm playing, and they are always so attentive. I love them."

I stayed a while longer, but I did not tell her of the strange affair at the old Sloane place, for I did not want to frighten her. But all that day my thoughts wandered continually, first to the picture of charming Betty playing for the spiders, then to the rasping voice of that terrible old man whose sinister face had peered at me out of the gloom.

By nightfall I was extremely nervous and fearful. It seemed as though something were about to happen—something cataclysmic, unearthly. Even the sunset over Chipuck mountain appeared ominous, with its dull, purple clouds through which the sun's rays stabbed like darts of evil fire. And as I stood gazing over the landscape it occurred to me that the ledge above old Sloane's grave seemed more than ever in danger of crashing down into the valley.

I SHOOK myself. Perhaps supper would dispel my unwholesome mood. But after supper I still was no fit company for either Mother or Albert and soon I retired to my room, undressing and switching off the light.

What time it was when I suddenly awakened, I do not know. But I had been dreaming once more of that hideous old man at the Sloane place. I dreamed that again he walked up the side of the house, contrary to any material rule of equilibrium, and that he entered my room through the window and stood sneering above me.

But the dream was close to reality this time—so close, in fact, that I stifled back my cry and suddenly sat up, wide awake, staring, the hair rising on my scalp. It even seemed that the room was filled with that ghastly odor of decay.

I strove to pierce the darkness, recurrent shivers coursing my spine. Then suddenly I leaped from the bed and ran to the drawer of my dresser where I kept a revolver. For on the side of the house, just below my win-

dow, I heard a faint rustling sound like the rubbing of silken folds together!

Instantly I was at the window, leaning out, the weapon in my extended hand. But there were clouds over the sky and it was intensely dark outside. I could hear nothing, see nothing. Everything was hushed. Even the song of the night insects was still.

I listened, peering into the darkness, straining to catch some movement or sound.

ALL at once there came a rift in the clouds. For an instant the moon shone full into the yard. And there, gazing up at me, a wicked, evil, leering smile on his face, stood the lean, cadaverous man from the Sloane place, his ghastly black clothes fading into the shadows, his gray face tautly drawn.

With an instinctive movement I lifted the gun and fired at the Thing below me! In a flash I knew he had been in my room and that I had a right to fire at a burglar. But the weapon had that hollow sound that occurs when the cartridge lacks sufficient powder. It was like the pop of a child's pistol.

I fired again. Again the explosion was a strange vacant sound. And then, as the clouds closed over the moon, I saw the figure drift eerily away into the darkness—and trailing back to me came that thin, faint, rasping laugh I had heard in the deserted house that morning!

But the shots had awakened my mother and Albert. In a minute they were in the hallway, excited, inquiring.

"An intruder," I explained gruffly. "Possibly someone after our chickens. He's gone now. It's no use to follow him."

I sent them back to their rooms and then investigated my own. Nothing was disturbed as far as I could see, though I had a feeling that the papers in my wallet had been searched. But all were there, even to the lease the horrible figure had signed and which I had forgotten to put in the office safe.

I was just about to turn out the light and get back to bed again when the house echoed to the frantic ringing of the telephone at my bedside.

Springing to it, I caught up the receiver. It was Betty's voice.

"Ray!" she called breathlessly. "Oh, Ray! I'm so frightened. Just now—a horrible face—peering in my window. Ray—it was like a skull! It gloated as though—oh, Ray, it made me so afraid, ashamed, horrified! I'm not dreaming. I tell you I'm not!"

"I know you're not," I shouted into the instrument. "I'm coming over as soon as I can dress."

It did not take me long. I stopped only to eject the faulty cartridges from my revolver. The bullets seemed to be set firmly enough but the cartridges were unusually light. After loading the gun with fresh ones, I felt more secure, and soon I was running down the road in the direction of Betty's.

I guess she had every light in the house turned on as I approached. She heard my footsteps on the walk and came to the door to meet me, a robe thrown over her shoulders.

She had recovered her composure somewhat, but she still was greatly agitated.

"It was horrible, Ray," she began at once. "I awoke from a terrible dream and saw him clinging to my window sill like a bat and staring at me. And oh, such an evil, smirking smile! His eyes burned into me, into my throat, my shoulders. His look made me so ashamed and so terrified. Who was he?"

"IT'S old Sloane come back from the dead for some evil purpose," I replied, with a sudden, strange conviction. The words were as much a surprise to me as to her.

She moaned, and I thought she was going to faint, so that I ran and caught her in my arms, pressing my lips to her soft hair, enfolding her to my breast. She snuggled against me as though she had found sanctuary.

Her aunt—dear little old Aunt Polly—came in a moment, she, too, in great agitation. But though she saw Betty in my arms she made no remark nor did her expression change. I could have blessed her for that.

"There, there!" I tried to comfort the girl. "Aunt Polly and I both are here now and nothing can hurt you. The man has gone and probably won't return tonight. In a few hours it will be daylight and I'll watch here with you."

"He stared at me so terribly," she moaned. "He seemed to—to want me."

Her voice faded into a whisper. And in that second my mind went back to the day when as a small boy I had heard the stories about Roger Sloane and the evil compact he had forced upon an unfortunate girl.

I cursed under my breath. I was mad with rage. But recovering myself I strove to quiet the frightened girl against my breast, and soon we were more at ease again.

Aunt Polly, gracious soul that she was, went to the kitchen and returned with ginger cookies and milk for us. Shortly the fear had passed and we all were laughing together.

STILL, I did not care to leave the house until daylight, and so I suggested that they retire and I would keep watch in the lower hallway. After long urging they finally agreed, and I took up my station before the front door.

When I was alone, the night seemed ominously, deathly quiet again. Clouds scudded across the sky, now dashing everything into deep darkness, now brightly illuminating the landscape as the moon shone clear.

I watched for a time and then caught myself nodding. I started up with a jerk. I told myself that if I were a sentinel on army duty I stood in a way to be court-martialed and shot.

The moon shone clearly for a few minutes and was dimmed again as before. I nodded. But it was more difficult this time to arouse myself. A stupefying drowsiness was overcoming me. I stood up and tried to shake it off. But before I knew it I slipped back into the chair.

I felt as though I were drugged. Some power greater than I could withstand was gradually pushing me deeper into that compelling sleep. I tried to fight it off. But I could not. My eyelids drooped, closed.

It must have been an hour or more that I sat there unconscious. My last recollection was the dimming of the moon again, and as it dimmed, I had a vague feeling that someone stood near me—someone who was very cold and sinister.

Then into my sodden mind crept the insistent thought that I had heard a cry—a woman's shriek. It persisted. I *had* heard a cry. Dumbly I repeated the thought in my mind—a cry, a woman's cry.

Suddenly I was wide awake. I cursed myself for sleeping. Who screamed? Where had the sound come from?

I gazed about me. The darkness outside was intense. But that cry!

I tried to get up, but I could not move at all. My brain was wide awake—thoroughly alert. But my limbs seemed paralyzed.

And now I knew I had not dreamed. The cry was real! I heard another shriek—a scream that had death in it. It was suddenly cut off, and there was the sound of a body falling with a sickening crunch.

With all my might I exerted every ounce of will-power I had. I arose from the chair, but I stumbled and staggered like a drunken man, as clumsy as though my feet were clods.

Yet fear overwhelmed me. I became distraught, almost a maniac. Stumbling, lurching, bumping against the wall, I ran back through the corridor to the rear of the house whence the falling sound had come. I almost was flung prostrate when I tripped over the body on the floor.

AND now my fear was almost too great. Was this the body of Betty? Was it her dear voice I had heard, ending in that death cry? With trembling fingers I searched for the switch on the wall. Yet I hardly dared press it, fearing to gaze on what its rays would disclose.

Then, summoning my courage, I made my nerveless fingers obey. I pressed the button. The light flashed on.

It was Aunt Polly—dear, brave little Aunt Polly! She lay there in her night-clothes—dead! There was some sort of cudgel in her hand, the screen door was wide open before her, and on her face a look of mingled anger and fear. Courageous to the last—to the point where her aging heart had stopped beating!

And I had been asleep!

Yet I did not linger over Aunt Polly. All my thoughts were for Betty. The strange paralysis was gone now; the power that had held me in its grasp departed. I leaped up the stairs. I dashed down the hallway to Betty's room.

The door stood open. A light burned inside. Again I was afraid for what I might discover. But I was too filled with anxiety to hesitate now.

I turned the corner, my revolver in my hand. I cried out in agony as I looked.

Betty lay on the bed, a coverlet drawn to her waist. But she was death-like, lying there so still.

"Betty!" I cried from the anguish of my soul. "Betty, dear!"

I sprang to the bed. I raised her in my arms, pressing my cheek against hers, my lips against her lips, calling to her.

And suddenly with the fury of a wild animal she fought me, striving to drive me away, beating her fists against me.

"Don't touch me!" she screamed. "Oh, merciful God in heaven! Don't! Don't touch me!"

"Betty!" I pleaded. "It's Ray. What is it, dear? Betty!"

Slowly her eyes opened, like one awakening from a trance. She stared at me and then suddenly sank into my arms, crying as though her heart would break.

"He came again," she sobbed. "He was in the room. He came in at the window. He tried to kiss me. Oh, Ray!"

I cursed myself for a traitor—I, who had fallen asleep. But Betty clung to me more tightly, weeping, sobbing out her story.

"HE was going to take me in his arms—carry me away. But suddenly he ran back to the corner. He was afraid. His face twisted in terrible rage. He cowered in the corner. Then Aunt Polly came. She had a stick and struck at him. But he did not mind."

She shuddered convulsively and hid her face in my coat.

"He was looking at the floor. He was afraid of something there. Oh, Ray, it was awful! I must have fainted just as he glided out of the window."

But at that moment, somewhere out in the darkness, my name was called.

"Ray! For God's sake, Ray, come out here!"

I started up.

"Albert!" I exclaimed.

Betty had heard it, too. She caught me by the coat.

"Yes, yes, you must go!" she said. "I'll be all right. He won't come back here. But you must catch him. Go, Ray!"

Albert called again. I caught up my revolver and ran from the room. Down the stairs I plunged and out into the yard. Albert heard me coming.

"Over there!" he yelled. "Beyond the apple trees."

I looked. The moon was coming from behind a cloud. And there stood the tall figure, a horrible grimace on its ghastly face, waiting. I pointed the weapon and fired. There came a cry of rage, thin, eerie, terrible.

Then the figure turned and ran.

"After him, Albert," I cried. "Watch him! Don't let him get away!"

I darted off, too, stumbling over dead branches, tripping in the long grass under the trees. The moon was shining full now and I could see that while my progress was exasperatingly difficult the figure ahead glided over the ground without effort.

Our way led uphill—always uphill! I tried to increase my speed, running, leaping, stumbling, until my breath came in gasps and the veins in my temples were close to bursting.

A dozen times I fell in the pursuit—and picked myself up. Off to my left I could hear Albert crashing through the undergrowth and cursing. Beyond the orchard was a clearing that had been pasture land. I plunged out into the open—and there a scene met my eyes that I shall never forget!

The gaunt man already had reached the center of the cleared space. Despite his black clothes I could see that the moon was shining directly through him!

But he seemed stupefied, frustrated. He was striving desperately to move swiftly, yet his progress was as slow as though a great weight were attached to him. And as I looked, all about me the ground had the appearance of silver, like a pool in the moonlight. I started to step forward but there came a warning cry from Albert.

"Go around! For God's sake, don't get into it. Go around!"

Instinctively I took his advice. I skirted the clearing. It took me much longer, and by the time I had reached the opposite side the figure had at last gained the shelter of the trees ahead of me and had disappeared.

ALL at once, it occurred to me that we were nearing that ancient grave on the hillside, and the thought drove me to further effort. I must catch him before he got there!

Panting, gasping, I plunged through the undergrowth of scrub oak and chestnut. I was almost at the grave. And just ahead of me there lay on the ground a form that was all silver, glinting in the moonlight like that strange pool we had avoided.

I was about to leap forward and throw myself upon the figure, when Albert, almost at my heels, swept me off my feet and in his brawny arms half carried, half dragged me away!

In another moment, with a roar that shook the earth, an avalanche of rocks and gravel plunged downward, uprooting trees, burying everything before it!

The cliff that for years had threatened to fall, at last had broken loose! Half the mountain-side seemed to have collapsed—and Albert had barely managed to drag me out of the path of the landslide, saving me almost by a matter of inches.

"God save us," Albert exclaimed in my ear.

"He did!" I said with deep reverence.

"And maybe the soul of old Roger Sloane," Albert added. "He's lying there under tons of rock and if he ever appears again he'll have to dig a long time."

"How did you know about—about the horrible specter?" I asked.

"I heard you go out. I couldn't sleep after you said someone had been prowling around the house. I followed you and waited. When the moon came out I saw him standing near the trees, looking up at her window. I'd seen him once when I was a boy. I yelled at you."

"And the silver patch?"

"Cobwebs," he said, "covered with dew. They tied Roger tighter than fence wire. It's nearly dawn and he wanted to get back to his grave. If he'd succeeded he could have come out again whenever he pleased. They said long ago that he sold his soul to the devil. But the spiders got him with their webs. They held him long enough for the rocks to bury him too deep ever to get out. It was a spider that killed him in the first place, and the other spiders have finished the job."

It was true. Like the Englishman's dogs that could not proceed with their hunting because of the cobwebs, the specter had been impeded by the gossamer until too late to return to his grave.

I COULD not speak. It was too mystifying, too horrible, for me to think about. I made my way back to the house. Dawn was only a few minutes away.

I found Betty very sorrowful over the death of her aunt, but she was brave about it, too. Briefly I told her what had happened. For a time she was lost in thought. Then a smile broke over her face.

"My little friends!" she said. "They helped me when I needed them! They came to repay me for my music. Do you know why that monster was driven back, there in the room? Did you notice?"

I shook my head.

"The spiders formed a magic circle about me beyond which he could not come. Then they trapped him out there. A spider caused his mortal death. His unhappy soul was afraid of them when he came to carry me away. My little friends! They stayed on guard with me until the avalanche buried him! I shall play to them often."

WITH daylight Mother came over and set the house to rights. Of course, I did not tell Betty at that time that since she was alone in the world I wanted to love her, and to protect her far, far better than I had during the night when I fell asleep. That all came later. Neither did Betty ever blame me for my faithless part. She said that the evil specter had cast a spell over me I could not resist.

But as Mother took charge of affairs in Betty's house I wandered to the porch and it was there I met Albert. He was black and smelled of smoke.

"A good job done," he said with an air of satisfaction. "Look!"

I gazed as he pointed, in the direction of the Sloane place. A wreath of smoke was rising there.

"What is it?" I asked. "What have you done!"

"Set fire to the damn place," he replied. "I'm taking no chances that old Sloane'll ever return."

There is one thing more. I became aware of it when I went home and looked again at the papers in my wallet. I don't know whether it happened when the specter came into my room or at the moment the avalanche buried him. But when I looked over the lease he had signed, I found that the name, R. Sloane, written at the bottom, had disappeared. The line was utterly blank.

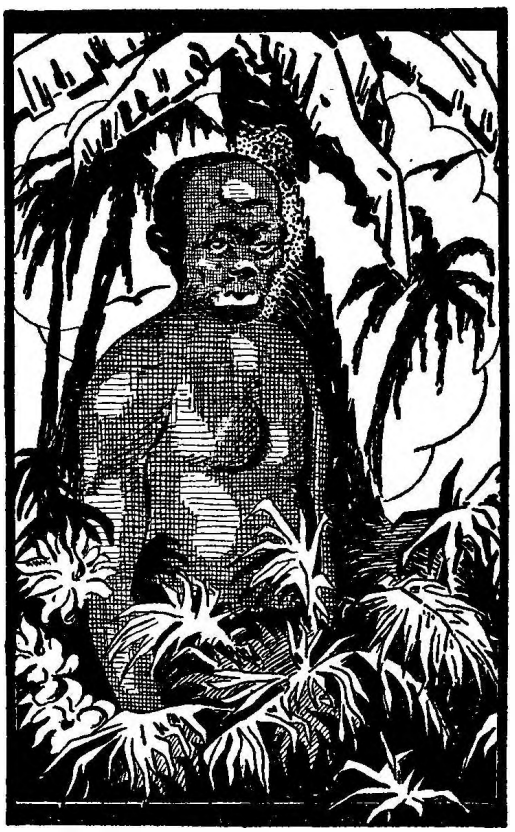
PAINTED UPSIDE DOWN

By MARK SHADOW

IT NEVER takes me long to make up my mind. To this I attribute such success as has been mine in the profession which has more or less been forced upon me—that of psychic investigator.

I pressed the button on the desk in the front room of my little house, looking out into Eleventh Street, New York City, and Maurice showed up immediately.

"Maurice," I said, "there's a girl walking up and down on the opposite side of the street, looking over at this house as if she wanted to come across, but hadn't the nerve to. Suppose you go to the door and look out as if you wanted to call a taxi. If the girl comes over and asks for me, bring her right in. Her behavior suggests a mystery."



Maurice never questions me. He is the perfection of servants, a Frenchman who has become an admirable citizen without losing his distinctive birth marks.

I watched out of the window, and I was not disappointed. The girl hesitated and came across. In a minute she was in my room. Tall, slender, dark. I had a renewal of the impression that I had seen her before.

"I can recommend this chair," I said.

"Oh, Mr. Shadow, I really didn't mean to——" she broke off and tugged at her gloves.

"Well, what does it matter what you meant?" I said cheerfully. "Here you are, and no one comes to see me—outside of my close friends—who hasn't a purpose."

"You don't know my name," she said, as if surprised, "but I know yours. You bought one of my pictures at the Independents this year. My name is Margaret Hawthorne."

"Oh, yes! 'Sand Dunes'—of course. A very distinctive piece of work. You see how nicely I have hung it over there. Delighted to meet you, Miss Hawthorne."

"Perhaps I shouldn't tell you, Mr. Shadow—it's not very tactful—but until you bought my picture, I didn't know who Mark Shadow was."

"I CAN'T hold that against you," I said smiling. There was something adorably naive in her manner.

"But now," she continued, "I've heard of so many people you've helped—people who didn't understand things, and got frightened."

"Are you frightened?"

"Terribly," she answered with direct sincerity. "There was no one I could confide in. I had to come to you. You liked my work, and I thought you might understand."

"That was right, Miss Hawthorne."

Now that she had come to the point, the whole atmosphere of the room was

The great ghost detective solves a mystery far stranger than a crime

As told to

ROBERT W. SNEDDON

charged. I could feel the tension of her anxiety.

"I made up my mind to come to you, but when I got out there, my courage gave out and——"

I did not tell her that I had seen her from my window, and had caught her mental signal of distress.

"Now you are here," I reassured her. "Nothing could be luckier. I haven't a thing on my mind at present. Suppose you start your story at the beginning."

"Perhaps you'll think me silly," she began. "If you do, stop me. When my people died, I thought I had a lot of money, so I came to New York, to the Village here, and I took a studio that was too expensive for me. I was living on capital, but I thought before long I'd be making money hand over fist—the dream all artists have. I ought to have taken a job as a commercial artist, and painted in any spare time I had, but it's too late to think of that. Well, last month, I came to my senses, and figured things out. I had a hundred and eighty dollars, my studio furniture and a pile of canvases. I couldn't go on, that was plain. I knew just one thing to do. I own an old house on the shore of the Sound, miles from anywhere. It's been in the family for nearly two hundred years, and came to me from an uncle—Father's brother. I packed up, sold my furniture, and got the landlord to let me go. I settled myself in the old house."

"Alone?" I asked.

She hesitated.

"Yes—I—why yes, there's nobody living with me, but——"

"I understand," I said gently. "You feel you are not quite so alone as you seem to be."

She nodded, and all at once she broke down.

"Oh, Mr. Shadow. What am I to do? I simply have to live there till I get going, but it's getting on my nerves—the horrible whispers—it's as though the whole house kept whispering in a weird, uncanny way."

"Quite so," I said calmly. "That's nothing unusual. There's an explanation of that somewhere. And what do the whispers say?"

"THAT'S the horrible part of it. I lie awake at night, straining my ears, listening so fearfully. Perhaps if I could make out what the whispers said, I wouldn't mind it so much, but it's not knowing that is so dreadful."

"Anything else out of the ordinary?"

She hesitated.

"It's ever so strange, but something is happening to my work. I'll start to paint the rocks and the water, and then I'll

suddenly find myself doing something else."

"What, for instance?"

"Painting some other subject. So far, it hasn't taken form or shape—just daubs—yet there's a vague suggestion of dark human shapes. I can't explain it—only it makes me shudder as though it were something nasty—unclean."

I looked at my engagement book.

"I'd like to see this whispering house of yours," I said.

"Oh, would you?" she asked eagerly, and then her face fell.

"And if I do anything to help you, you'll give me another canvas just as good as 'Sand Dunes.' Is that a bargain?"

A look of relief leapt into her face.

"Oh, but your time—it's not right!"

"I'm really interested," I said. "Don't worry about my not being repaid. I may be paid very well. When can we go?"

"We? Must I go, too?" she asked.

"Absolutely. I must find out—you'll forgive me saying this—if you are in any way responsible for the phenomenon. Whether it is produced through you as a medium."

"Oh, but how could I? I hear the whispering, and it makes me afraid."

"Quite so, but there are instances where people hear knockings, and these knockings stop when they leave the scene. It has been proved that they are the wholly unconscious mediums for the production of these noises. Do you know anyone who would go with you?"

She thought for a minute.

"I think I can get Janet Dunlop. She's a good sport."

"Right! I'll bring Maurice whom you just saw at the door. He'll attend to the food part of the picnic."

"Picnic!" she echoed. "So you don't think there's anything to be alarmed at?"

"Not if we keep our heads," I told her, but perhaps I might have done better to warn her of the dangers ahead. After all, when one opens a door by accident into the dark past, and some vile aspect peeps out, it is well to be armed at all points. Here was a house venerable with age, impregnated with the record of deeds, good and evil. What its history held, I had no idea; but that it was black, I already had a shrewd suspicion. I made up my mind to guard against all risks.

As the "Whispering House" has within the past few weeks changed hands, Miss Hawthorne having found a purchaser for it, I do not feel at liberty to state its exact location. One must be careful to steer clear of the laws of libel, and not state a house to be what is usually called "haunted."

The house is visible, however, to passengers on ships traversing the Sound. Perched on a promontory of rock, its clapboards are gray and silvered with age, fretted with the sand blasts of many a gale. It is three stories in height, built on a substantial base, with deep cellar. A hexagonal look-out room rises a floor higher. Built of massive timbers, its framework is as perfect as the day it was erected. There is at least one panelled room which I would like to have, but to tear it from its setting would be vandalism.

Behind the house is a barn, and there are several sheds attached. A few trees stand in the midst of a stony pasture.

I drove Miss Hawthorne, her somewhat silent girl friend, and Maurice to the house, two days after our interview. It was a cool drive on this April day, and inwardly I wondered what sort of cold cheer I was letting myself in for.

I ran the car into the barn and we went on to the house. As we stepped inside, I shivered involuntarily with the chill of the place.

"This will never do," I said, "I suppose there's some way to heat the house."

THERE was a furnace, and Maurice disappeared down the steps to the cellar. We heard him raking the bars vigorously. Meanwhile, I got a blaze going in what was the principal living room, and the two girls set the table, and then went up to the bedroom overhead. I planned that Maurice and I should sleep in the living room. A knock on the floor would rouse us in case of need.

I started a fire in the kitchen stove and set a kettle of water on it, and while waiting for it to boil I climbed upstairs. I looked into each empty room, and very musty and chill they all were. I saw nothing out of the ordinary, nor did I have any warning of anything unseen.

On the top floor, I came to the ladder up into the look-out room, and climbing it I was taken with a faint dizziness, a most unusual thing for me. For a moment, I clung to the ladder with both hands. The vertigo passed. It was quite unaccountable, and it puzzled me, especially as I felt myself without reason stooping my head as if afraid it might strike upon something overhead where obviously there was nothing.

I stood for a moment in the look-out room

with its windows on all six sides. There was a seat all round it, and a table with a telescope. Over the table was a heavy iron hook screwed into a beam, from which probably a lantern had been suspended. The dust was thick here. Nobody had been up for ages.

I came down, and as I set foot on the dusty floor I paused abruptly. I could see my own footprints plainly, but beside them were others—newly made—the unmistakable marks of a naked foot. The prints stopped at the foot of the ladder. I traced them to the landing, and there they ended. They had not been there when I crossed the floor, and yet I had heard no sound. I examined the prints. Each toe mark was widely separated, as though the person were given to going without shoes. I stood for a little, startled, as was Crusoe when he saw a savage footprint on the shore of his desert island. Whatever inhabited the house had not been long in showing it meant to attach itself to me.

"Mr. Shadow! Oh, Mr. Shadow!" Miss Hawthorne's voice recalled me to pleasanter thoughts, and I came down. I saw the question in her eyes, as I entered the living room, and I shook my head.

"Not a thing," I said lightly. "I don't suppose you ever saw anything strange."

"If I did, I'd jump out of my skin, I think," she said.

"Does Miss Dunlop know what's on?" I asked.

"I told her about the whispering, that's all. She's dying to hear it."

"WONDERFUL timber in the house," I commented. "These beams in the ceiling. They look like ship's timber."

"They are. You see my people were shipowners in the old days."

"Whalers?"

"No. I don't think so. They traded with Africa principally."

There was a question on my lips, but I kept it for another time.

We gathered about a comparative cosy supper table. There was a fair heat coming up from the furnace, and Maurice had prepared us a remarkable meal in the circumstances.

I noticed Miss Dunlop looking expectantly at the kitchen door, and finally she turned to Miss Hawthorne:

"What does your old woman do, Margaret? Doesn't she wait on the table?"

"What old woman, Janet?"

"The one who opened the bedroom door after you went downstairs. I was fussing with my hair at the mirror, and all at once I saw the door open and an old woman peer in. When she saw me, she shut the door again."

"Why, Janet. You must have been dreaming. There's no old woman in the house," said Miss Hawthorne in amazed tones.

"I couldn't see her face—she had on a sort of funny old hood or cap, and—Goodness!—did you say there was no old woman?" She stopped and stared at us with a horrified expression. "What is it? Don't tell me I've seen a ghost. I am scared to death."

She began to shiver.

"Drink some hot coffee this minute," I said sharply. "Now, let us get this straight. You didn't actually see her. You only saw a reflection in the mirror."

"I certainly saw the door open, and then this—this thing looked in—I saw her hand on the door. You don't suppose, Mr. Shadow, she's the one who's doing the whispering?"

"I can hardly answer that. The main thing is, not to be afraid. You know any apparition—and I don't say definitely that your old woman was one—gets the power to appear, pretty much from the waves of fear you throw out. You become a sort of electrical apparatus, which creates the usual ghost. Not always, however; I won't say that. So don't be afraid. Courage is a strong armor against such intruders."

I did not add—there was no need to alarm these young ladies any more than could be helped—that in many cases of hauntings, the most brave and fearless are as helpless as children against the attack of the evil creatures which materialize out of the atmosphere, the ghouls, the vampires, the shapeless monsters of the borderland.

NOTHING of an alarming nature happened during this first night under the roof of the old house, though at some hour of the morning I was awakened by a faint sound as of someone whispering; but, with the consciousness of the sound, the noise stopped instantly. I thought I must have been dreaming, and dozed off to sleep again. No one was disturbed in the night, and we met at breakfast cheerfully.

I spent the morning prowling about the house. Somewhere in it was secreted the moving force of whatever haunted it, the focus point of evil. There was a fair-sized

library of old books, and I went through them carefully but without finding a clue. Much may be gleaned from a local history, or personal writing such as a diary, but there was nothing of the kind here.

Miss Hawthorne showed me one of her spoiled paintings, as she called them, and I studied it for a time.

"Do you mind if I turn it upside down?" I asked. "Now, does that suggest anything to you?"

She looked at it puzzled, gasped slightly, and said:

"Why, it looks like an African scene—or what I imagine an African scene must look like—and there are figures—and this circle certainly looks like a drum—there's a man with a drum, I'm sure—how amazing!"

"They are celebrating some heathen rite, round an idol. This hideous shape might be an idol. You've heard of spirit writing? Well, this might be spirit painting, Miss Hawthorne. You said your ancestors knew Africa?"

"Yes, but I've never been there. I don't know the first thing about it—about the coloring."

"I have seen some sketches of the West Coast, and I must say this is suggestive of them. Whoever is at your elbow prompting you, or working through you, knows Africa. You might call this an African primitive—it might be done by a native with a smattering of art as we know it. There is no doubt this is a picture of a ceremony. It grows on you as you look at it."

"It does," said Miss Dunlop. "I can see exactly what you mean. There is action in it. It's really a very vivid picture, Margaret."

"But why should I paint it upside down?" asked the artist. "No wonder I couldn't make out what it was."

"Some people do mirror-writing automatically; that is, writing which has to be held up to a mirror before it can be read. This, no doubt, is something of the kind."

"Well, I don't like it," she said decidedly, "and I won't be happy till we find out what is wrong with this old house."

I SENT the two girls out with Maurice in the car, in the afternoon. No sooner were they gone than I went up to the look-out room. That peculiar sensitiveness to occult trouble which has assisted me in other cases had warned me that the room would bear further investigation. I was not mistaken. I was quite prepared for a repetition of that faint dizziness which had overtaken me on my first visit, but not for the experience which for a moment checked the beating of my heart.

As I took my foot from the topmost step of the ladder, about to step into the hexagonal chamber, my ankle was gripped in a grasp of steel. An unseen bony hand had encircled my ankle. I could almost feel the individual pressure of fingers and thumb. Powerless to move my leg, I tottered uncertainly. Then I toppled forward, luckily for me, not backward. Had I fallen backward, I would have gone down the trap and broken my neck, or at least some of my bones on the floor below.

As I went forward, I thought my ankle would snap, and then the pressure was gone as mysteriously as it had come. I peered down. Of course, there was no one there. I turned down my sock and looked at the angry red ring on my ankle. It was only by good luck that it was neither sprained nor broken.

THINGS were growing warmer now. Whatever was in command of the house was not going to stop at harmless pranks. Violence was in the air. This was no playful poltergeist moving furniture and throwing pots and pans about, but a dangerous entity, animated with murderous malice. I had received definite warning to mind my own business.

But this was not the first time I had received such a message, and I was not to be moved from my purpose by it. From this moment onward, however, I could not afford for a second to relax my vigilance. At any instant, the forces of evil now spread throughout the house might gather to one point and strike—even with death.

Something had happened in the past in this very look-out room which was being mirrored in my experience. I must find out if possible, and be ready to avert another tragedy of a like nature.

I came down that ladder very warily but composedly, and back to the living room. As I entered it, I could have sworn someone went out of the room and into the kitchen adjoining. There is a certain movement of atmospheric particles which signals that someone has been in a room, and besides, the door to the kitchen, a swing one, was vibrating slightly.

I darted forward and into the kitchen. There was a faint sound of lightly slippered feet slipping down the stone stairs to the

cellar, and I followed. There was nothing visible when I reached the stone-paved floor —the place was dim and I had no light— and I was just turning away when I heard a faint whisper at my ear. I turned my head sharply. Within a couple of feet of me I saw a little old woman—or something which resembled the shape of one—and with a pricking of my scalp I saw that where there should have been a face was nothing —a white smooth surface without features, encircled by a hood.

I did not hesitate, but shot out my hand. I touched nothing but the wall, or rather the end of a beam projecting from the wall. I recoiled and scuttled upstairs, as startled as any amateur ghost hunter. There had been something especially repulsive about this white mask, as though it cloaked a horror too grim for human eyes.

But I did not escape scot free. Close to me up the cellar stairs followed this whispering—irritating as the dripping of a tap— which became a torture almost as unbearable as must have been the single drop-drop of water upon the shaven skull of the prisoners of the Inquisition. As it continued without cessation, the ear strained to catch the inaudible syllables, till the nerves provoked by impatient curiosity were raw and tingling.

The others, when they came home for supper, heard the whispering the moment they entered the house.

"Now you know," said Miss Hawthorne. "I used to lie awake waiting till I could make out what was being said, but I never learned. It wasn't like one person whispering; it was as though the whole house, every plank and beam in it, were trying to convey a message to me—only I couldn't tell whether for good or for bad."

"I can stand most things," said Miss Dunlop, after we had eaten supper to the accompaniment of the infernal whispering. "That old woman didn't really scare me until I knew she was not supposed to be there, but this ceaseless whispering gets me. It's too uncanny for words. If only we could find out what was being said!"

"We may—at any time," I answered, "and when we do, the trouble will be very nearly over. It is the pent up desires and unfulfilled purposes of those who have gone which lie at the root of all troubles of this kind. A man going upon some desperate errand who is killed in an accident, is likely to linger close to earth—to be earthbound by his anxiety until the burden of care is lifted from the person concerned. You know how unsettled you are yourself until you have carried out something you've planned to do. If you die before you have a chance to put it across, you may not do so your ownself after death, but that desire may be transmitted to another. Only—here is the danger: your desire may be captured on the way by some soulless thing waiting for such a chance to gain a spark of ghostly life, and used by it to wreck and not to benefit human life. Therein lies the danger. But this is dull stuff, isn't it? What about a game of bridge?"

After our game, we settled round the fire.

"Now, Miss Hawthorne," I said quietly, as I saw that the cards had played their part in quieting her nerves, "I want you to think back. Tell me what you can about your ancestors. Tell me the history connected with them and this house."

"I am ashamed to know so little, but I'll do my best," she volunteered.

THERE was nothing about her father and mother, good people as they must have been, except that they died at a too early age of influenza, nor of her grandparents; but when we came to the period of Amos Hawthorne, her great-grandfather, I felt sure I was on the track.

Amos had made a comfortable fortune in a way considered quite reputable in his day. He had shipped hogsheads of rum, bales of cloth and cheap muskets to the Guinea coast, bringing back ivory, white and black. He had made a number of voyages, each time carrying a cargo to Newport or Charleston of hundreds of unfortunate blacks, packed between decks like herrings. Retribution must have struck him suddenly, for he was found hanging in the look-out room where he spent much of his time when ashore.

"There's a horrid hook up there yet," added Miss Hawthorne. "I wouldn't go up to that room at night for worlds. One of the house slaves found him. They say he cut the tongue out of one of his slaves, but whether this was the one, or whether the story was just hearsay, I don't know. You know how these tales get twisted as they come down, and of course they were only whispered in the family. There's no doubt Great-grandfather Amos was a brutal old man—and what he must have been when he was younger and on his own poop deck, heaven only knows! They say my great-grandmother was scared to death of him. Once in a fit of fury he caught her by the

throat and nearly strangled her. He injured her so, she never could raise her voice above a whisper."

"Oh, my God!" cried Miss Dunlop, jumping up to her feet and looking over her shoulder. "Then it's she who's doing the whispering—she must be in this room with us. She's the old woman I saw, don't you think, Margaret? Oh, why can't she tell us what she wants and be done with it?"

AS we sat there in the firelit room with its shadowy corners, in the silence which had fallen upon us all after this suggestion of the identity of the whisperer, the sound seemed to grow in intensity, pleading, pulling at us. But now there was added to it another sound, like the subdued and stifled growl of some savage animal.

Maurice raised his head suddenly, and the cigarette dropped from his fingers.

"Hush!" he said softly, leaning forward. "A drum—I hear a drum—far away, surely. What——"

I looked at him in surprise. I heard no such sound, and all at once I came to my senses. The power beyond had nearly managed to divert my attention. I turned to look at Miss Hawthorne. She had risen to her feet and was almost at the door. Something in the rigidity of her body startled me into action. I leaped to my feet and set myself in her path.

"You must not leave the room. Return to the fire. Now! At once. Obey me. Now!"

I summoned all my will power to enforce my repeated command.

She appeared to shake herself free from something drawing her forward—in no other way can I express her action—and looked at me with amazed eyes.

"Why! What did you say? I forget what I was going upstairs for. How silly of me."

"Don't bother just now," I said, with a warning glance at the others. "Put some more wood on, Maurice. And what about some coffee?"

He went out, and I heard him stirring in the kitchen.

We talked spasmodically for a little, and then I called out:

"How about that coffee, Maurice? Isn't it ready yet?"

There was no reply, and urged by sudden alarm, I signed to the girls to stay where they were and went hastily into the kitchen. There was no sign of Maurice, and then I discovered him. He was struggling to close the back door, feet firmly planted on the floor, his back bent like a bow with the strain. He knew I had come in, and over his shoulder he managed to squeeze out a muffled, "Help!"

I threw my weight against the door. For a moment, I felt its stubborn resistance, then it closed quite easily.

"What's the matter?" I asked, as Maurice straightened up, puffing.

"Matter! I was by the sink here, and I looked up—and *voilà*—through the window against the glass, like in the morgue, a negro with a knife through the throat here—and such eyes. I rush to the door which is open, and just as I begin to close, I feel him push—and such a push! But, sir, it is a dead man who push. I have seen many dead—I help bury them in France—but a dead negro—many years dead—ough!"

"You'd better take the coffee pot in, Maurice," I said. I saw he was genuinely scared. "I'll lock this door."

"I do not fear the dead, but the dead who walk—with a knife through the jugular—that is not so agreeable. And one who looks like a mummy—yes, that is what he is, a mummy negro. What a house!"

"If you want to go home, Maurice," I told him, "I won't keep you. I won't think any the less of you for going, either."

That touched him on the raw. He drew himself up stiffly.

"But no, to run away! To leave you and the ladies! No, indeed. Only when I go in the kitchen, I leave the door open, eh!"

So we left it at that.

ELEVEN o'clock found us still by the fire. A wind had risen and was screeching about the eaves of the house. But loudly as it howled, it did not drown the sound of that unholy whispering, nor yet the suggestion of bestial snarling which punctuated it at irregular intervals.

Our conversation died down, till finally midnight found us ourselves reduced to whispering. The effect was grotesque. But the rivalry of whispering was too much. I saw it must stop, so I sprang to my feet with a show of briskness.

"Bedtime! You two girls better go up to bed, and Maurice and I will get some sleep here. If you hear us moving about, don't leave your room. And, of course, we're here, so don't be afraid to knock if you feel at all anxious or hear any suspicious noise."

I thought they were a bit subdued as they went upstairs, but I set an oil lamp in an alcove half up the stairs to their floor, which helped to dispel the shadows. There is always danger in the shadow.

I did not trouble to undress, and lay down on the cot near the door to the hall where I could hear the slightest movement. Maurice lay down also. I heard him sigh once or twice, then his even breathing told me he was asleep. Sleep was not to be mine this night, I had made up my mind to that. I knew instinctively that the crisis was at hand. The atmospheric station had broadcast a danger signal, and I was keyed up to any encounter.

I sent my mind back to past triumphs over the powers of evil, to my handling of that case which came to be called "The Thing in the Chest," and to the conclusion of "The Oakdale Ridge Vampire"; but try as I would, my mind began to wander, my eyelids crept closer. I shook myself awake and fixed my attention on the whispering. Could I read into its indistinct sounds any suggestion of connected speech?

SUDDENLY my mind jumped to attention, as though a bugle had been blown in my ear. Could I have been asleep? I sat up, every sense now alert. The wind had gone. The fire was dead—all but a speck of flame flickering in its center. Maurice slept as though dead. I touched him, and he did not move. All was peaceful and quiet. Serenity reigned.

And then in a twinkling I knew everything was wrong, terribly wrong, and that this peace, this imponderable silence which lay upon the house, was a shout—a warning shout of danger!

There was not the faintest sound of a whisper.

Overhead, a faint trickle of sound crept down to me. Someone was moving overhead with utmost precaution.

It took me but an instant to grab my flashlight and slip on the moccasins I use as undress house shoes. As I reached the landing, I was amazed to see Miss Hawthorne come from her room and without hesitation go towards the stairs to the third floor. She carried no light, but made her way without faltering. To all appearances she was walking in her sleep, and I knew there was only one thing for me to do—to follow her and see that she came to no harm.

She went up the stairs, unconscious that I was at her heels, and made for the ladder of the look-out room. She set her bare foot on the first step, ready to go up, and at that moment I noticed she was carrying a cord of some kind in her hand—it looked like the belt of a dressing gown. The suggestiveness of this rope leaped to my mind at once. I had a panicky vision of her body dangling to the hook above, and of my stooping my head to clear the quivering white feet.

Some vile, malevolent influence was prompting her to a death such as had befallen her great-grandfather.

I put out my hand instinctively to catch the sleeve of her silk negligée. As I did so, something disengaged itself from the shadows. I can only describe it as a shadow from the floor which leaped up at me. A horrid odor filled my nostrils and all but stole away my senses, and as I reeled I felt a hand clutch at my throat. A red mist swam before my eyes, as bony fingers searched for my life. And then I felt Miss Hawthorne fall against me, and involuntarily I threw out my arm.

No doubt, the contact of our two bodies produced some disturbing shock. In that instant the compression was gone from my throat.

Miss Hawthorne gave a shudder, and looked at me.

"Whatever—" she exclaimed amazedly.

"You've been walking in your sleep," I said. "I heard you, luckily. You were just going up the ladder here."

"I—how horrible. I might have hurt myself." She looked down at the cord she was still holding, and raised it to the light of my flash. "What on earth—this is the cord from Janet's dressing gown—it's her brother's old one, really—she brought it because it was warmer—what a queer thing to be carrying round!"

"You'd best go back to bed, or you'll catch cold," I told her.

She caught my arm nervously.

"Listen—isn't that Janet calling?"

She ran downstairs, while I followed her. Miss Dunlop was standing at the door of the bedroom.

"Oh, there you are, Margaret! Thank heavens. I had the most horrible dream. I dreamed the old lady came into the room and began trying to pull me out of bed, telling me to go and save you. You were in terrible danger from Hannibal, upstairs in the look-out room, and I couldn't move hand or foot. It was terrible, and she kept shaking at me, whispering in my ear, and

I could make out every word: 'Go save her from that devil—he killed Amos—he'd like to kill us all, him and his old idol in the cellar.'"

"Whatever are you talking about, Janet?" said Miss Hawthorne. She turned to me. "Janet must be asleep still."

Miss Dunlop made an indignant protest.

"Sleep nothing. I'm awake now for the rest of the night. What a dream! I feel as if I were pinched black and blue. I never knew anything so real. And being able to make out what the old lady was whispering—such a story!"

"Well, she seems to have gotten over her story at last," I said.

"But why to me?" asked Miss Dunlop. "Why not to Margaret, since she is the old lady's great-granddaughter?"

"I suppose because this negro, Hannibal—a negro slave probably—stood between. Margaret was the center of conflict. One wanted to help her, the other to hurt her because she was a Hawthorne. She was to keep on paying for a sin of the past—some cruelty to the negro, no doubt. The message had finally to be delivered to someone who had a sensitive streak. You have Celtic blood in you, Miss Dunlop, haven't you?"

"On both sides. Irish and Highland Scottish."

"That accounts for your being a receiving instrument. Well, I feel that the show is over for tonight."

"I hope so," said Miss Hawthorne wearily. "I don't think I can stand any more."

"You won't have to," I assured her, "we are near the end now. The things which have happened tonight were the last incidents of the struggle."

I left them at the bedroom door and came downstairs. In some strange way, even the air of the house felt purer. Maurice was still sleeping quietly. That has always appealed to me as perhaps the strangest incident of the whole night.

Next morning, we all went down to the cellar. Miss Dunlop insisted on that, and I was eager myself to test the statement as to the idol. I turned my attention at once to that beam, against which I had placed my hand through the phantom of the old woman. Both Maurice and I tried to move it, but without any success. We attacked the mortar in which it was set, with a crowbar, and after some hours of labor we managed to withdraw the beam. I could not help giving a satisfied exclamation. The concealed end was rudely carved into a hideous image.

"This must have been brought from Africa and built into the house in some way," I said. "You know it isn't at all unlike the idol in that African picture of yours, Miss Hawthorne."

"It's very like it," she said in an awed voice. "I might almost have used it as a model."

Maurice, who had been probing in the recess exposed by the withdrawal of the beam, drew back his hand with a smothered grunt.

"There's something here, sir. Perhaps the ladies ought to go upstairs."

"No!" they protested.

"Well, there's a lot of bones here—a skull with skin on it—and some kind of box."

"Let's have the box, Maurice, first."

HE pulled out a brass box, and as he did so the lid fell off the hinges. There was a tatter of old rags in it.

"Treasure!" said Miss Dunlop eagerly. "Oh, Margaret!"

Miss Hawthorne picked the rags out.

"No," she said disappointedly, "just a lot of old stones."

I am afraid I laughed as I picked up the uninviting pebbles.

"When these are cut, young lady, you'll not need to worry for some time. Diamonds, and big ones, too. I wonder who ever hid them away. They must have known you would need them."

"I know who put them there," said Miss Dunlop quietly. "I didn't tell you last night, but it was like seeing a movie in my dream, only when I waked up, I remembered everything. I saw this house, and old Amos and Elizabeth—that was the old lady's name——"

"Why, yes, Janet," cried Miss Hawthorne. "How did you know it?"

"Amos Hawthorne," continued Miss Dunlop, "was a domineering brute. I saw him catch his wife by the throat and frighten her so she could only whisper afterwards. I saw him thrash the negro Hannibal for stealing rum out of the brick storehouse—where the ruins are, and then I saw Hannibal bowing to the idol he kept down in the cellar, making *ju-ju*—that was the word—and then lying in wait for his master. I saw the old man go up to the look-out room and fall from the ladder as the negro caught his ankle. His neck was broken, and I saw Hannibal hang him to the hook so

as to make it look like suicide. I saw your great-grandmother, Elizabeth, going in fear of Hannibal until one night he had a fight with another negro, who killed him. It might have been all right if Hannibal had been buried properly, but your great-grandmother with her own hands dug this grave in the cellar—she was a capable old woman—and hid the diamonds and the body of Hannibal there, and sealed up the hole with the idol. I saw her dying a month later, before she could tell anyone. They said it was her throat which killed her, but there were the marks of two hands on it."

Miss Dunlop stopped. Her tones had been those of a prophetess. She pressed her hands to her eyes, and remarked in her usual voice: "Goodness, I'm doing a lot of talking, surely. But it just came back to me suddenly."

I sent the two girls upstairs, while Maurice and I lit a glowing fire in the furnace. Then we pulled out the bones of the slave, together with a rusted knife, also in the recess, and consigned them to the flames. Later in the day, when nothing was left but ashes, we cleared the grate and threw the contents into the sea. Nothing is so purifying as fire and sea.

THAT was the end of the haunting. The evil lurking in those bones of a murderer, sustained perhaps by some magic inherent in the idol, was banished from the house. And the old woman, having eased her mind of its long-carried secret, was at rest.

The whispering was never heard again. As I said, Miss Hawthorne sold the house, and with the proceeds from that and the diamonds she has gone abroad for a time with Miss Dunlop.

I begged for the African picture, and it hangs in my study, an object of admiration which, I pleasurably reflect, increases in value with each day of my possession.

The Vengeance of Egypt's Dead Kings

DR. J. C. MADRUS, French Egyptologist, recently declared that once again, as at various periods in the past, the dread power of a dead Pharaoh has reached out of the dim past and taken a terrible revenge upon those who would disturb the sanctity of a royal tomb.

In support of his statement, he points out that five prominent men associated in some way with the tomb of Tutankhamen have died by accident or obscure illnesses since the passing of Lord Carnarvon, the first to head this particular research expedition. Professor Georges Benedite, the last of the group, was director of the Egyptian section of the Louvre. He, also, was among the scientists who mocked loudest and in print at the idea that Lord Carnarvon's death was caused by any psychic influence exerting its power in the royal burial place.

One of his favorite expressions was: "I have spent most of my life among mummies, and they never harmed me. The fact is, a number of our younger Egyptologists engaged in making excavations met death or were injured—not through some malicious influence—but because of falls or encountering poisonous gases. Superstitious persons have attributed these happenings to occult vengeance."

Nevertheless, Benedite died in Egypt, his passing being due to what Dr. Madrus describes as an "inexplicable disease." His death followed shortly upon that of Professor Casanova, of the College of France, another Egyptologist who for years had been busy excavating among the sepulchres in the Valley of the Kings.

Almost as sensational as the death of Carnarvon, was the demise of Sir Archibald Douglas Reid, eminent British radiographer, who died of an obscure malady a little more than three years ago. In December, 1923, he arranged with Howard Carter to take an X-ray photograph of the mummy of King Tutankhamen. By thus examining the juncture of certain bones, he figured that one might guess with fair accuracy the age at which the youthful Pharaoh was placed in the tomb in the Valley. The investigator even hoped to make a retroactive diagnosis, to ascertain whether the ruler died of disease or whether he had been killed.

But Sir Archibald never took the photo. Less than a month after his promise to make his investigation of the mummy of the swathed King, he died in Switzerland of another of the "mysterious diseases" which appear to attack those who enter the royal tombs.

The Mysterious Mr. Leaf

He is one of the world's most famous mediums. But, even so, how can this man do such things?

By SAMRI FRIKELL

FOR a number of years, I have looked forward to the time when I might witness some of the clairvoyant wonders of the celebrated Horace Leaf, of London.

Almost everyone who has investigated spiritualistic phenomena has heard of the miraculous Mr. Leaf. Many have read his book, *The Psychology and Development of Mediumship*, which is a classic of its kind. He is one of the most widely traveled lecturers on psychic phenomena in the world. For years he has appeared on famous platforms under the auspices of the British College of Psychic Science, the London Spiritualist Alliance, The Psykisk Oplysningsforening, and in the Auditorium of the State Hospital, Copenhagen.

Some months ago, Mr. Leaf came to America. While he was here, he called at my house and gave me a demonstration of what he calls his "faculties." I am thus glad to be able to give a first-hand account of this curious man to the readers of GHOST STORIES.

It should be thoroughly understood that in this article I am not endorsing Mr. Leaf, nor am I hazarding any judgment as to the character of his performance. I shall merely state the facts and let the reader judge for himself.

Mr. Leaf was brought to my drawing-room by Mr. Francis Fast of the First Spiritualist Church of New York. I found Mr. Leaf to be a man of immense height, with a curious stoop to his shoulders and droop to his long arms; dark hair and thick, black brows, under which searching eyes looked out at the world.

It happened that there was also present that afternoon as a guest, Miss Florence Reed, the distinguished American actress whose performance of Madame Goddam in *The Shanghai Gesture* was one of the dramatic triumphs of recent years. Miss Reed was on the eve of leaving for an extended trip abroad, and asked Mr. Leaf about the Hope spiritualistic photographs at Crewe, England. It was her hope that Mr. Leaf would give her a message, but all during the conversation that rainy Sunday afternoon, Horace Leaf sat on the edge of a chaise-longue earnestly absorbed in all that was said, but saying very little himself. To look at him sitting there, not even the most imaginative would suspect him of mediumship. He seemed to be more like a rustic gentleman who could tell you about agriculture, were it not for his bucolic taciturnity.

It was not until Miss Reed was in the midst of farewells that Mr. Leaf seemed suddenly to become articulate.

"Pardon me," he began composedly, "but

there is someone standing at your side."

Miss Reed looked at me.

"I don't mean Mr. Frikell," said the medium. "I mean the other gentleman."

Florence Reed looked round, wonderingly.

"He is a spirit," explained Mr. Leaf casually. "A little old gentleman, not more than five feet two, with a short, clipped, almost military beard, who says that you will know him because his name is Sammy. Do you recognize him?"

"Yes," said Miss Reed. "I know him. The description is admirable. The name is right. He is my grandfather."

Horace Leaf nodded. "Yes," he said. "The old gentleman smiles and nods in agreement with you. Now, Miss Reed, your grandfather is holding someone by the hand that I can't see. That is because whoever it is died recently. It is a new spirit, but Sammy says you will know who it is, and calls the name 'Joe'. Do you know 'Joe'?"

Florence Reed caught my hand, and then sank into a chair.

"That is my mother!" she gasped. "She died last year. We always called her 'Joe'!"

I WISH it were possible for me to tell all that Horace Leaf then told Florence Reed, but because of the private character of the message, I am unable to do so. Suffice it to say that Mr. Leaf told Florence Reed the dying words uttered by her mother, and the birthplace of her mother.

Now, let us stop a moment and examine this quite extraordinary feat.

It is stated as a fact by Mr. Leaf that he had never before heard of Miss Florence Reed.

It is a fact that he did not know that Miss Florence Reed would be a visitor at this gathering.

It is a fact that he had no opportunity to consult anyone from the time that he met her until the time that she departed.

It is a fact that the names of her mother, her father, her grandfather, do not appear in the sketch of her life printed in *Who's Who in America*, nor in any other biographical dictionary of my acquaintance.

It is a fact that no one in the room besides Miss Reed knew the name of her mother or grandfather, or the birthplace of the former—which was Hamburg, Germany.

Furthermore, the facts which Mr. Leaf told Miss Reed were of such an intimate and painful character that she would in no circumstances have discussed them outside her own family circle. They were not generalities; they were so specific as to be embarrassing.

What is one to make of such an unlikely exhibition? Whether it is put down to telepathy, clairvoyance or to the actual return of the dead—the fact remains that these things happened in the presence of competent witnesses, and that Mr. Leaf did not stall, parley or fence for his information, but came straight out with it, speaking deliberately, concisely, and directly to the point.

I was quite truly astonished at it, and made up my mind to see more.

On the following evening, Mr. Leaf appeared before a group at Hyslop House, which is the headquarters of the American Society for Psychical Research.

On a table, various members of the audience deposited personal objects—rings, watches, letters, etc. Mr. Leaf picked up these objects one by one. He called forth names, dates and places with such astonishing accuracy that in the course of an hour and a half he made but two blunders, and it was, by and large, the most masterly exhibition of such things that I have ever witnessed.

YET, and here is the strange part of it, I went again to see Mr. Leaf in Carnegie Hall a few nights later, and to my great bewilderment, I saw him fail again and again. Hardly a thing was right until he came to a woman whom I knew, and who was sitting directly in front of me.

He told this woman that her husband had committed suicide, and why. I knew these facts to be correct.

Thus, Mr. Leaf has left me considerably puzzled.

I have studied his career, and find that he is one of the most active spiritualists in Europe. When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wanted someone to follow him through Australasia, his choice fell on Mr. Leaf. Of him, Sir Arthur said:

"Mr. Horace Leaf is one of the most genuine and experienced mediums and psychometrists with whom I am acquainted. He is also a dignified and lucid speaker. He has had world-wide experience, and has left a trail of truth behind him in his travels."

His psychic activities have given him wide public recognition. Two rather recent examples of his work will illustrate the reason for this.

One is the Agatha Christie case, connect-

ed with the mysterious disappearance of that well-known authoress.

A pair of Mrs. Christie's gloves were handed to Mr. Leaf without the slightest indication being given him as to whom they belonged. After holding them for a few moments, he got the name "Agatha," and added: "There is trouble here. The person who owned these gloves is half-dazed. She is not dead, as many think. You will hear of her, I think, next Wednesday."

Agatha Christie was discovered alive in the North of England the following Wednesday.

The case of Iris Watkins is not less remarkable. The body of this dead young woman was found in a culvert in most suspicious circumstances. Efforts were made to unveil the mystery without result. Then a criminal investigator took to Mr. Leaf a purse that had belonged to Miss Watkins. Upon handling it, he described the deceased girl and gave her Christian name, said that she had been drowned and mentioned certain circumstances connected with her which were found to be quite correct.

When I asked Mr. Leaf to tell me more about himself, he said:

"I never had a psychic experience until I experimented in the development of my own mediumship, notwithstanding that I was studying to be a Christian minister. I have sat with some of the most famous mediums in the world, and I have made a study of some of the religious practices of primitive races with a view to understanding their psychic significance, particularly the Maoris. My best psychic powers are clairvoyance and psychometry. I occasionally experience clairaudience, and have had materializations in full daylight through my own mediumship.

"I love literature and history. The study of philosophy has been a hobby for twenty years or so, and I have kept up-to-date in my study of psychology.

"I drink when other people pay for it, smoke, and occasionally swear. My wife says I should become the most depraved creature in the world if I had not so little courage and so active a conscience. I am not so sure about the conscience, but there is something in the general truth of the account, although I don't tell my friends so as a rule.

"My father was an artist, and I love art.

"I take a 15-inch shirt neck and a 16-inch collar. In England they don't make collars to meet the shirt neck. The result is most trying, and if I ever come to a bad end, this deplorable fact will undoubtedly be the cause."

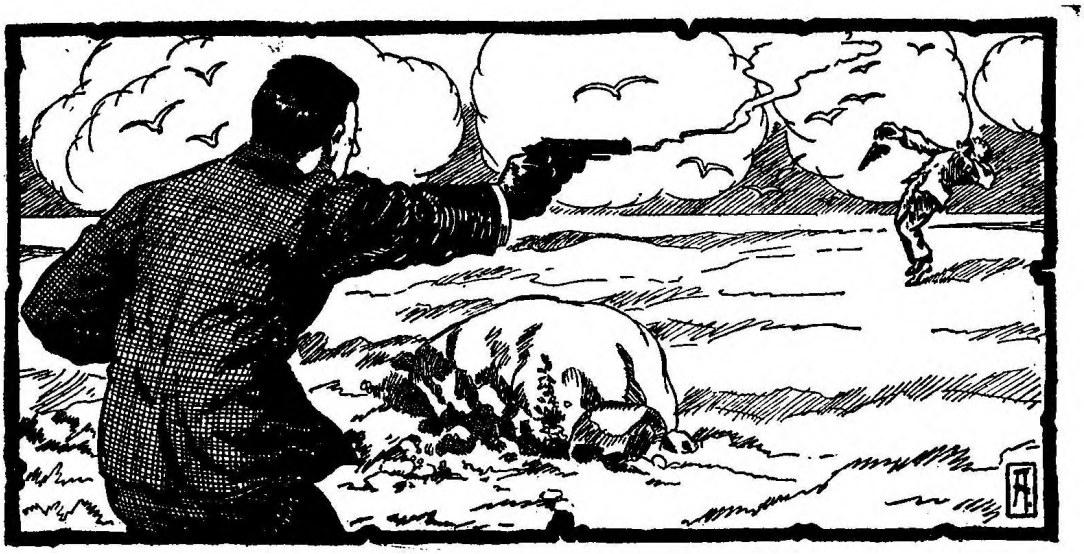
He's Not Afraid of Ghosts

DUNRAVEN CASTLE is one of the most famous in Continental Europe; possibly because of its unusual and splendid architecture, probably because it long has been believed that it was haunted by the ghost of a Countess—allegedly beautiful and familiarly known as the Blue Lady, because she is reputed always to have worn clothing of that color. Through many years, she is alleged to have frightened tourists by beckoning to them from the eaves, where it is believed her murdered body is hidden.

For centuries the castle has stood idle and is in a bad state of decay. Sir Windham Henry Wyndham-Quin, the Earl of Dunraven, who succeeded to the title in 1926, is not afraid of the phantom and is renovating and redecorating the place with the intention of occupying it.

In old Welsh histories, the castle is referred to as Dindryfan Castle and it is probably the most ancient structure of its kind in Wales. It is believed that the Blue Lady was a guest at the castle in the early reign of the Wyndham family, and was one of the titled ladies and gentlemen who assembled there in the long ago for a hunt through the beautiful County of Glamorganshire.

According to the legend, the Countess was murdered and her body hidden by a jealous husband, who discovered her in the arms of a lover at the end of the great gallery in which hang the ancestral portraits. Soon after her disappearance, it was said that her ghost would walk slowly down the iron railed stairway, singing softly, finally disappearing with a dismal wail. The specter was one of the reasons the castle was abandoned. At various times in recent years, the Blue Lady has frightened away curious persons who have gone to the place to investigate the story.



When the RED GODS Call

Wherein the Juet mystery map is found, but instantly leads to new disasters

By ADRIAN BLOCK
As told to EDWIN A. GOEWEY

SIR LIONEL JUET'S vast fortune was left to Adrian Block on the condition that he find his family's half of an ancient map prepared long before as a pledge of friendship. The search for it led him into deadly conflict with Geoffrey Juet—and with the phantom of old Tchotan!

Aided by his sister Edith, her fiancé, Bruce Dyke, and Talbot, an ex-detective, he managed to outwit Geoffrey in the first clashes. And Setaucus, a friendly old Indian, secured supernatural aid in laying forever the spirit of Tehotan. Then Pawte-won, the ghostly protector of Adrian's family, led him through a storm to the Indian grave where the map was buried. Adrian dug it up and carried it to the cabin of Setaucus.

The succeeding incidents are narrated by Adrian himself.

LIFTING the steel container, the old Indian examined it, found it was securely fastened, then laid it aside.

"We shall open it—soon," he said. "But you are wet and exhausted. Take off your clothing. You cannot afford to become ill now." He tossed some logs upon the embers in the fireplace.

I tried to protest and reached for the box. He pushed me back and assisted me to strip off my saturated clothing. Until that moment I had not realized how nearly spent I was. But, as I swayed and clung to the table for support, he wrapped me in blankets, then helped me to a chair close to the fire. Next, he prepared a hot, pungent drink, which he compelled me to swallow, though it seemed to scald my throat. Almost upon the instant it soothed my jumping nerves, and I rested my head against the back of the chair and closed my eyes for a few moments of much-needed rest.

When I awoke—for I had slept until the dawn was beginning to chase the shadows from the cabin—it was a moment or two before I realized where I was or what had occurred. But the sight of old Setaucus sitting before the fire, smoking, brought back my scattered recollections.

"Do you feel better?" he asked.

"Yes. I am quite myself again," I replied eagerly. Then I thought of my find and shot a glance at the table. The steel

box was there, just as when I fell asleep.

"Wait!" he said, as I arose and reached for it. "Dress first. Your clothes are dry."

HOLDING my impatience in check, I did as he directed. But my eyes remained fixed upon my prize. When I had finished, he took a chisel from the mantel.

"I have examined the box," he said. "If you want to learn at once what it contains, we must break it open."

"Do so," I answered.

Those old hands, with muscles like seasoned rawhide, exerted a greater strength than I could have brought to bear. Slowly, deliberately, but with irresistible force, the chisel was pushed under the lid of the box. Then Setaucus used his full strength—there came a snap and the container lay open before me. Inside was something tied in a small rubber sack.

With trembling fingers I lifted this and loosened the string. I stripped off the waterproof covering and found a packet wrapped in oiled silk. In my excitement my fingers proved clumsy, but I finally succeeded in unwinding the inner covering and disclosed a rolled parchment. Instantly I felt that I had reached the end of my quest! But my nerves were pounding so that I simply couldn't make another move.

Setaucus understood. Quickly he unrolled the bit of parchment and held it before me. One glance told me all I wanted to know.

Beyond question, it was the Block half of the map!

"That is it!" I gasped in a whisper.

He placed it in my hands. And, clutching it tightly, I slumped into a chair. But I soon recovered my nerve.

I had won! I had beaten Geoffrey. Despite all the handicaps he and the evil phantom of old Tehotan had placed in my way, I had succeeded. I now possessed the document which would, in a comparatively short time, bring me the great fortune Sir Lionel had left me in his will. Nothing could balk me now. I would first carry it home to show my sister and the others, then place it safely in a bank vault in New York. Later I would cable the Juet barrister and wait for him to set in motion the necessary legal machinery.

Within weeks—or a few months, at most—I would be in control of sufficient wealth to insure my sister's happiness, save the family home and do almost anything else I might desire.

While I was building castles, Setaucus had been preparing breakfast. I rolled the parchment again, wound the wrappings about it, placed it in the box and tied the container with a bit of string. While we ate, I thanked him over and over for his assistance, and begged him to come and make his home at The Pines. He listened, a faint smile twisting his wrinkled visage, and from time to time he shook his head.

"Your appreciation and your continued friendship are all the reward I want," he said finally. "This is my life—out here where nothing can shut off the sun, where storms rage freely, with the graves of my ancestors about me——"

HE paused suddenly, listening, his expression tense.

"I hear dogs!" he said—"dogs on a scent! There are no animals in these sand wastes to draw hunters. Is it possible your enemies are on your trail?"

Dismayed, I leaped to my feet and listened. But the faint sounds which reached my inexperienced ears would have meant nothing except for Setaucus' warning. However, I did not question his statement. Too well I recalled Talbot's guess as to why my overcoat had been stolen by Geoffrey's men. He had suggested that dogs would be used to track me some day. By some hook or crook Geoffrey or one of his men had learned I was absent from home. It was probable they had noted sufficient of my movements to surmise my errand in going out among the Indian graves and were running me down! Of all times, this was the one when I could least afford to have them come up with me. If they caught me with the map in my possession——

"You must leave here at once," said the old Indian.

I snatched up the box and shoved it inside my shirt. The sounds outside had grown louder and nearer. Now I could recognize them as the baying of dogs. I took my automatic and the extra cartridges from my pocket. My efforts the night before had kept them dry.

"Bloodhounds!" whispered Setaucus. "They are having trouble in the still damp sands. But they are not being thrown off the scent. However, I know a way to trick them. Come, get up on my shoulders. I will carry you to the water's edge—down through the gully behind the house. They are coming from the other side and cannot see us. And you will leave no scent for the dogs."

"But—you can't carry me," I exclaimed.

He laughed harshly. "I could bear twice your weight. I will carry you to the bay. You must take to the water and wade a mile or two before coming ashore. No dog can smell out a trail under water. Besides, by carrying you, you will leave no footprints. They can't be certain you headed for the bay. Hurry—up on my shoulders!"

While he had been speaking he had opened a trap in the floor and concealed the dishes we had used. This would prevent any intruders from learning whether he had had a guest at breakfast.

Only the seriousness of the situation—and my fear of losing the map—made me obey. In a moment I had climbed upon his back and locked my arms around his neck. Immediately I realized that my weight meant little to this old warrior. Without apparent effort he stepped to the rear door—the loud baying of the hounds was growing dangerously near—and moved swiftly down into the gully. Then he walked rapidly toward the bay, always keeping behind the bushes and scattered trees.

SUDDENLY the noise made by the dogs ceased. I knew what it meant. My enemies—in my mind there was no doubt as to their identity—had already reached the cabin! Their dogs were unable to follow the trail from there. Another minute and we were at the water's edge. Setaucus leaned over and I slipped from his back into the water.

"Hurry!" he said, giving my hand a final grasp, then pointing out the proper direction. "And carry your revolver ready for instant use! I shall go back, and try to put them on a false trail."

As he disappeared into the bushes like a gliding shadow, I waded out to where the water was knee-deep, then pushed ahead as rapidly as I could, my revolver held in my right hand, my left inside my shirt, clutching the steel box.

On and on I stumbled, each step seeming to grow more difficult. Distance I could only guess. The time seemed interminable. Then, suddenly, around a bend in the shore and a considerable distance in front of me, a rowboat came into view. There were three men in it. For a moment I comforted myself with the thought that they were early-morning fishermen. But, fearful that my wading might excite suspicion, I scrambled ashore.

As I turned to watch the boat, I went cold all over with fear! Not only had the others noted me, but they had turned their craft in my direction and were sending it through the water with all the power they could give to their oars. I could think of but one thing. They were more of my enemies—desperate thugs from Geoffrey's band.

Before me stretched a mile or so of sand dunes, dotted only occasionally with shrubbery and offering few opportunities for concealment. I broke into a run and headed toward the place where I thought the main highway should be. But my wet shoes prevented great speed. I had gone only a few hundred yards when I heard the report of a pistol. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw the boat had reached the shore and that its three occupants were starting after me hot-foot.

Striving to force a better pace, I made for each succeeding clump of brush, trying to keep out of sight as much as possible. My pursuers fired several times, but no bullets came near me. A glance told me I was holding my own; that the others were also finding the going in the sands heavy.

But now, to my consternation, I heard the baying of dogs off to my left! Looking in that direction, I saw two men racing from a copse of trees, the one ahead holding two great hounds in leash. Obviously they were the ones who had trailed me to Setaucus' hut. They had heard the shots and joined in the chase.

If they turned the dogs loose, I would find myself in very serious difficulties. As a warning that I was prepared to give battle—as well as to indicate I would shoot the hounds if I could—I fired two shots toward the men at my left. These returned the fire, then changed their direction so as to join the others, probably for the purpose of consultation.

Again I struggled to increase my lead. Beyond, I now could see plainly a row of trees growing at regular intervals. Undoubtedly this was the highway. If I could reach it ahead of my enemies, I might hail a passing automobile and thus escape. Then came more shots. This time the aim was better. The bullets kicked up sprays of sand ahead of me.

With an oath I swung. The fight was not to be all one-sided. I took careful aim and fired. One of my pursuers staggered, then dropped. As the others gathered about him, I resumed running. Though my feet felt like lead, I covered considerable ground. As I came within a hundred yards of the highway a car or two sped by. But their

drivers did not heed my cries. Probably the signs of a chase and the echoing pistol shots were sufficient to scare them away from the obviously dangerous spot.

I LOOKED behind me. One man, a big fellow, had left his companions and was gaining upon me. I fired at him wildly. He answered with a single shot. Almost before the bark of his weapon reached me, I felt a sting in my shoulder and staggered a few steps. I had been hit; however, it was little more than a scratch, I believed. I raced on, holding my other shots for closer quarters. For I realized that I would be overtaken before I could reach the roadway. I seemed to be growing a bit dizzy and could feel the warm blood trickling down my arm.

Then, right before me, appeared a little hillock topped with matted salt-grass. I gained the top and hurled myself behind it. Next, I pulled myself to my elbow and fired at the other. The bullet must have gone close, for he, too, threw himself upon the sand. In doing so, he lost his hat. And, as I caught a momentary glimpse of his dark features, I knew he was Geoffrey, the man from whom I had most to fear!

The chances were fifty-fifty as to which of us would kill or disable the other. As he started crawling toward me, I fired again. He paused. Then came a new thought. Above all else, he must not obtain the precious parchment. Snatching the box from beneath my shirt, I quickly buried it in the sand, then pulled the grass over the spot so as to make it appear that the ground had not been disturbed.

Raising my head, I peered out. Instantly a bullet kicked up the sand almost in my eyes, and I dropped back. Then, before I could determine my next move, I caught the crunch of running feet—and the next moment my trailer came tearing over the mound and hurled himself upon me! I fought to free myself, but he beat me helpless with the butt of his weapon.

Half conscious, I thought I heard reports—sufficiently loud to have come from rifles. But if my antagonist heard them, he paid no heed. He began searching me, all but tearing the coat and shirt from my back in his frantic efforts.

Then came more reports. Geoffrey rasped out an oath, hurled me from him, pulled himself to his feet and ran. I managed to drag myself to the top of the hillock and sent my last shot after him. But my hand shook, and I missed. I heard cries and turned to find myself looking into the excited faces of Dyke and Talbot.

"Kill him! It's Geoffrey—kill him!" I cried.

"It's no use firing," said Talbot. "He's dodging like a mad rabbit, and neither of us can handle a rifle well enough to get him at the distance." He stooped and wiped the blood from my forehead and hand. "Are you badly hurt?"

"No, though he tried to kill me. Help me up."

AS they raised me to my feet, I looked across the dunes. My enemies, dragging the dogs and assisting the man I had wounded, were hurrying in the direction of the bay.

"In heaven's name what happened?" asked Dyke.

"I found the map—last night——"

Startled gasps from my friends interrupted me. "Did he take it from you?" cried Talbot.

"No. See!" I dropped to my knees, tore at the sands and recovered the steel box. "Here it is—safe. But they almost beat me. Only your timely arrival——"

"Come on!" said Talbot. "We must get away from here quickly! They may get reinforcements and try to intercept us. We can talk on the way."

Clutching the container, I was assisted to the highway, where I saw one of my automobiles parked by the roadside.

After we had covered a mile or two in the direction of home, the others demanded to know when and how I had found the parchment. I told them, but said nothing about the phantom of Paw-te-won acting as my guide. From the way I told my story they had to infer it was Setaucus who had located the mound in which the steel box was hidden.

As to their opportune arrival, the explanation was simple. Edith, after my departure, had awakened Dyke and Talbot, told them she feared for my safety and insisted that they arm themselves and prepare to leave at daybreak and search for me if I had not returned. They surmised that I probably had gone to Setaucus' cabin.

Shortly before sun-up, when they were about to leave The Pines, the telephone bell had rung. Edith, thinking it probably was me, had answered. A man's voice asked for me. Instantly her suspicions were aroused. She replied I had gone out for a

few minutes, but that if he would leave his number I would call back. The one at the other end of the wire at once hung up.

The circumstances made Edith frantic. She believed the speaker was one of my enemies who merely wanted to make certain I had left home. Without further delay Dyke and Talbot had taken my speediest car and raced in the direction of Setaucus' shack. It was while they were rushing along the highway—within a comparatively short distance of their destination—that they heard the shots and saw me running across the sandy waste with several men following.

Leaving the car, they dashed toward me, arriving just in time to save my life.

WHEN we reached home, Edith met us at the outer gate. And though I tried to hold her interest by showing her the steel box and explaining that it contained the precious map, she refused to be enthusiastic over my success until she first had washed and dressed my wounds, and made certain I was but slightly injured.

However, once I had been made comfortable, she and the others examined the map with keenest interest, and the period of rejoicing was so prolonged that it was noon before we regained a semblance of calmness.

When Talbot and Dyke left us to prepare for luncheon, my sister closed the door and came to my side.

"Have you guessed why I became suspicious—why I insisted that the men go in search of you?" she asked.

"No—unless it was a sort of intuition."

"It might have been intuition which caused me to go to the library. But it was the absence of Paw-te-won from the picture over the mantel which told me you were together again—somewhere out in the storm! That was what frightened me into doing what I did!"

"And—is he back?" I gasped.

"Yes. But for hours the frame held only a blank canvas."

The return of the others prevented further discussion then, and as they remained with us thereafter, my thoughts were diverted to other things. Throughout the afternoon and evening we discussed the problem of the immediate future, and finally came to the conclusion that, while we probably would be able to protect the parchment if we hid it in the house, it would be safer to take it to New York next day and place it in a bank vault, at least temporarily.

For this trip we would use a car, Dyke driving and Talbot and I, heavily armed, assuming the guardianship of the steel box. By keeping to the main highway to the city, which in broad daylight always was crowded with traffic, an attack need not be feared.

When we retired, I carried the steel box to my room and hid it behind a heavy piece of furniture, a highboy which could not be moved without such noise as would awaken all of us. Also, I placed a loaded revolver beneath my pillow and Dyke and Talbot, who occupied the adjoining room with the door wide open, were similarly armed. Edith went to her own apartment, with old Jason sleeping outside her door as guard. The dog was given the run of the lower portion of the house, so that he might give warning if intruders approached the place.

We took these elaborate precautions merely as a safety measure, for none of us really believed Geoffrey and his men would again attempt to enter The Pines. The fact that he had failed to find the map upon my person probably caused him to believe I had not recovered it. And before he learned the truth or was able to attack me again, we hoped to have the bit of parchment safely locked in a bank.

But there is no gauging the desperate lengths to which a hardened criminal will resort.

Although I soon fell asleep, my rest was fitful and I frequently started from my slumber, imagining something had awakened me. Each time I snapped on the light and each time found the room untenanted except by myself. My persistent uneasiness annoyed me. And when I awakened for perhaps the fifth or sixth time, I was so exasperated that I rolled over and attempted to go back to sleep without making my customary survey.

But I did not sleep. And within a few minutes I became conscious that, this time, I actually was hearing the sound of something moving across the floor of my room. Then, with a suddenness which almost forced me to cry aloud, a circle of light flashed across my bed, reached the opposite wall, then came back and played momentarily upon the surface of the table near me.

A cold sweat broke out all over me. Ten to one the intruder was a follower of Geoffrey—or the villain himself! I realized a death struggle was imminent. To cry out

in order to bring the others to my aid would probably result in the marauder shooting me before I could make a move in my defense. I must make a lone fight!

Without sound I pushed my hand beneath my pillow until my fingers grasped my revolver. Then I reached out slowly until I could touch the electric switch close to my bed. In doing this I made a faint rustle—I lay still and breathed regularly as though sleeping. Nothing happened. I believed the intruder had not heard.

Setting myself carefully for a spring, I pressed hard upon the button. Instantly the room was ablaze. I bounded from my bed, my weapon ready.

BUT I had miscalculated. The prowler was the crafty Geoffrey Juet and he had heard! He had been poised almost above me! And before I could raise my revolver he was upon me, knocked it from my hand, and together we crashed to the floor!

At the same instant I heard cries from the room beyond and a tattoo of blows upon the door. I understood. Geoffrey had locked my friends in their quarters, thereby shutting off help in that direction.

This compelled me to fight all the harder, and I tried frantically to get from beneath the hulking brute. Several shots rang out. Dyke and Talbot were firing through the door, hoping to frighten off my assailant. But Geoffrey held on and his fingers reached my throat and began slowly to choke the life from my body. I struggled desperately but found myself growing weaker.

"Lie still, you fool!" he snarled. "Tell me where the map is—and I'll release you. If you don't, I'll kill you like a rat!"

I made a mighty effort and all but wrenched myself from his grasp. But in a flash he had closed with me again, and his fingers seemed to be burying themselves into my flesh. My eyes were starting from my head. Livid spots appeared before me. Then—there came a crash—as though a door had been smashed open.

The man sprang to his feet. I looked past him. The door opening into the hallway was open. The phantom of Paw-te-won, its fingers working convulsively, was creeping upon my 'enemy!

With a cry like that of a trapped animal, Geoffrey hurled himself upon this unexpected intruder. But the specter met him half-way, grasped his wrists and held him helpless.

Hardly realizing what I was doing, I staggered to my feet, lurched to the other door and turned the key. It flew wide and Dyke and Talbot stumbled in. But they advanced only a few steps, then fell back with frightened cries. I turned.

What I saw froze me in my tracks.

Geoffrey, fighting and cursing, was battling like a maniac to free himself. But he was like a child in the grip of the specter. While we gazed, Paw-te-won lifted him in his arms, bore him to the open window by which he had gained access to the room, swung him across the low sill and hurled him out into the night's blackness. There was a fearful shriek, then tearing, rending sounds. I guessed what it meant. Geoffrey had fallen among the vines by means of which he had crawled to my window. These had broken his fall.

Snatching up my revolver, I leaped to the opening and looked below. I saw the fellow pick himself from the ground and start away, limping. I fired—several times. But I was too unnerved to take careful aim. An instant later Geoffrey had disappeared into the shadows. Then I heard the roar of a motor. Again my enemy had escaped.

I turned to find my friends still standing in the doorway, wide-eyed and frightened. Paw-te-won had disappeared. The next moment Edith, followed by Jason and the other servants, came into the room. Each one seemed to be shouting a different question.

Making a determined effort to appear calm, I stated I had imagined I heard a noise in my room and had fired before sufficiently aroused to realize I was really alone. It was a weak explanation, and I knew none of the servants believed me. For the overturned chairs and twisted rugs told a different story.

However, with the assistance of Talbot, I persuaded them to return to their rooms. Then I told Edith the truth.

When she finally retired, after declaring she and old Jason would sit up for the remainder of the night behind locked doors, I went to the library with my two friends, taking the steel box with me. I noted both examined closely the painting of Paw-te-won, then turned to me for an explanation. Talbot, though still visibly shaken, was the first to speak.

"That Indian who saved your neck looked like this fellow in the picture," he said. "But I suppose he was this Setaucus you have been telling us about."

I shook my head. "No, it was not Setau-

cus, but Paw-te-won. Now, you two have got to listen to me—until I tell you everything I've been through since I first undertook to gain possession of Sir Lionel's fortune. I'd have spoken before, but you wouldn't have believed. Now you've seen a phantom with your own eyes, and you can't help believing."

THEN, for perhaps two hours, I recounted my adventures since I had first beheld the specter of the Algonquin chieftain in the London fog—I told of the other ghosts I had encountered at frequent intervals and of the parts they had played in the bizarre experiences which at times had all but driven me mad. And I supported my statement by detailing how Edith had noted only a blank canvas in the frame at such times as the phantom had been elsewhere helping me. I don't know how much the others believed then; but their gaze alternated between the picture and my face, and their features became more and more grave as I proceeded.

"What you have told us is almost too fantastic to be credited," said Dyke, shaking his head. "And yet—I saw an Indian, an exact duplicate of the figure on this canvas, hurl Geoffrey from the window. I simply don't know what to think. I'm going to my room, to sleep if possible. Maybe, by tomorrow, my head will be clearer. Good night."

Talbot made no comment, but stationed himself before the picture and studied it for a long time. Then, with a shrug, he turned to me. "I'll remain with you in your room until morning. I don't think they'll be back tonight, but it's safer. However, we've got to get that map to a New York bank vault tomorrow, sure. If we don't, we're likely to lose it. After that, I'll be through here. I'm not a coward. But when I see the kind of things I have tonight—well, the city is the place for me. I'm off the Indian stuff for life."

Early next morning we reconnoitered outside, found the vines broken and hanging, and the wheel tracks of a car which had cut across the lawn in its mad dash for the open road. I also noted the servants were disgruntled and evasive when addressed, but as they made no threats of leaving, I did not question them.

It was well along toward noon when we left for the city as planned, Edith bidding us good-by at the gate and begging us to be constantly on the lookout for a surprise attack.

However, we reached the city without incident and placed the parchment, still in the steel box, in the vault of a bank in which my father had been an official until the time of his death. This task completed, we breathed sighs of relief and started in search of dinner, preparatory to returning home. But we did not eat—not until many hours afterward.

We crossed Wall Street and, anxious to escape from the elbowing, early-afternoon crush, took a short cut toward Broadway through the corridor of an ancient office building in which I knew we would encounter few persons.

As we turned a corner after passing the elevators, Dyke came to a sudden stop, gasping. He grasped my arm and pointed to a small doorway opening upon a side street. And Talbot and I also gasped. For standing there was the counterpart of Paw-te-won, beckoning frantically. With startled cries we raced for the figure. But it had disappeared when we reached the open and was nowhere to be seen among the milling crowd which we glimpsed.

"WHAT—what does it mean?" came in a hoarse whisper from Dyke.

"God only knows," I answered weakly. "But I think there is trouble at home, that Edith is in danger. We must get to her as fast as the machine can carry us."

The ride to The Pines was a long-drawn stretch of agony, in which we spoke but seldom. Most of the time we kept to the rear roads, so that we might make greater speed. As we approached the station of the town nearest my home, one of the natives who recognized me, beckoned. I stopped the car, wondering if he had any news which would relieve our anxiety. What he said was that all the servants except Jason had left The Pines and had gone to the city by the noon train. This was disquieting information, but it did not seem of sufficient importance for the Algonquin's phantom to have appeared to us.

Hoping against hope that Edith was safe, we continued at top speed. As we swung up the driveway, the house seemed to bear a sinister aspect. No one came out to meet us. We tumbled pell-mell from the machine and raced inside. Only death-like silence greeted us. No answers came to our cries. The house appeared to be deserted.

Then, with Talbot leading the way, we began a systematic search. This soon brought a solution of the puzzle; but one

which made us frantic with fear and anger. In a closet we found old Jason, trussed and gagged. When we had freed him, he told us the fearful news—Edith had been kidnaped!

Soon after our departure, the servants had deserted in a body, taking all their possessions with them. Edith, always courageous, had met the situation with a good grace and insisted upon helping Jason prepare a dinner against our return. They were in the kitchen when several men—one a large fellow with a scar on his right cheek—rushed in upon them and they were quickly overpowered.

Jason had seen Edith gagged and then carried to one of the closed cars waiting near the front porch. The auto immediately drove away. After he had been tied and thrust into the closet, he had heard the other car leave.

"The devils—damn them! They've beaten us after all," shouted Dyke, livid with rage. "Come on, we must overtake them—kill them! They watched until we left, until the cursed servants deserted her. Then they——" His words ended in a sob.

I was too broken to reply, but Talbot, cool in such a situation, took command. "Pull yourself together, sir. We'll gain nothing by rushing from here without a plan. Where would we go? We haven't the slightest idea where they have taken Miss Edith."

"BUT we can't remain here like wooden men," cried Dyke. "We've got to do something to get her. We'll notify the authorities throughout the Island, call upon the New York police——"

"And before we can rescue her, they may kill her, particularly if hard pressed," Talbot said.

"Talbot is right, Dyke," I suggested. "We must keep our heads and plan carefully. Above everything else, Edith must not be placed in greater danger."

"That's it, sir," Talbot went on. "We're dealing with desperate criminals—men who would hesitate at nothing. I believe they would do away with your sister rather than be captured while keeping her prisoner. They realize what their punishment would be if arrested——"

"But we must do something! What do you suggest?" Dyke almost sobbed the query.

"There's nothing we can do but wait," Talbot insisted. "We all know the reason for the kidnaping. It is for the purpose of holding a club over Mr. Block—to compel him to give up the map or a great sum of money to get her back."

"We'll give up the map—and money, too—won't we, Adrian?" Bruce begged.

"Surely. Anything! But how can we get in touch with them?"

"This is the kind of crime I'm familiar with," said Talbot. "You'll hear from these people, and soon—unless you start the authorities after them. No doubt spies are now watching. When they see we have not set the police after them, they'll know you comprehend their purpose."

"And?"

"Maybe this afternoon, surely not later than tonight, they will open negotiations with you. They may send a messenger and they may telephone. Anyway, the safest course is to wait for developments, for a time at least. While waiting, we can arm ourselves and plan what to do if they remain silent."

During the remainder of the afternoon we kept an anxious vigil, not leaving the house. But no one telephoned; no stranger appeared. Finally, when our nerves were almost worn ragged with anxiety, we decided that, if we received no word by ten o'clock, we would board my motor-boat and search the bay on the southern shore, for we had many reasons to believe that it was upon one of the numerous islands there that Geoffrey and his men had their hide-out. And there, most likely, they had taken Edith.

Hour after hour dragged by, and still there was no break in the terrifying monotony of agonizing waiting. It was close to half past nine, and Dyke was carefully examining the weapons we would take with us should we go in search of the abductors, when the long-awaited summons came. The telephone bell rang. Motioning Dyke to listen at the extension across the table, I placed the receiver to my ear.

"ADRIAN BLOCK speaking," I said, but I could not keep a bit of tremble out of my voice.

"This is Geoffrey Juet," from the other end.

"You damned scoundrel!" I cried, shaking the instrument in my anger.

"Leave that out, and listen to me, you young fool!" His tone was low but metallically hard.

"You're a contemptible coward! You

don't dare to face a man alone!" I shouted.

"You're wasting time," the other cut in. "I'd face you alone, or any man living; if necessary for my purposes. But enough of that. You're an interloper and a fortune hunter. You're trying to steal property which rightfully belongs to me.

"That's a lie, and you know it. You're a criminal, a disgrace to your family, your name——"

"Listen to me, you crazy fool! I'm not going to argue with you but demand what I want. I hold your sister. She is at my mercy, absolutely and completely. Unless, within twenty-four hours, you meet me alone and turn over to me the strip of parchment you have recovered, you'll never see her again——"

"God, if you only dared to come and say that to my face!"

"You've learned sufficient about me to know I'll stop at nothing to get what belongs to me. I want Lionel Juet's money. And I'm going to have it or—you've seen the last of your sister."

"But—but——" My emotions overcame me so I could scarcely speak.

"I would have come to your place to make my demands, but I will not battle your Indians again. They're one race I never fought, and I don't know how to handle them. They cut one of my men in the back when we found the safe——"

"Damn you—tell me exactly what you want."

"I want the Block half of the map. I know you have it. That lying Indian out near the bay said he'd never seen you. But we found the place where you'd dug it up. I all but got it from you, but your men came and drove me off with guns. Last night another of your Indians——"

"What do you want me to do?" I fairly shrieked.

"You went to the city today, probably to place the parchment under lock and key. Regain possession of it before noon tomorrow. After that, I will call you again on the wire and arrange a meeting-place where you can turn it over to me. Try to trap me—and your sister will pay the forfeit! I shall talk no more tonight. But—if you love your sister and want to save her life, you will do as I have directed."

I caught the click as he disconnected.

"He's got us—we must do as he says," whispered Dyke brokenly.

But Talbot stepped between us. "I caught enough of what you said to understand. Let me try to learn the point from which he was phoning."

Weakly I pushed the instrument toward him. Then, almost unconsciously, I glanced toward the picture of Paw-te-won, who so often had come to my assistance.

Shrieking, I was upon my feet on the instant. The canvas was blank. I pointed, and the others pressed close.

The next moment we heard a sound behind us. Wheeling, we saw the phantom of the Algonquin, his tomahawk brandished high in his right hand, standing before the doors leading into the hallway.

He threw wide the doors, motioned for us to follow, then turned and headed for the open!

Paw-te-won is about to lead Adrian and his friends into the very den of the bandits! Blood will flow freely before this night is over! What chance has Adrian to save his sister's life? Will he be compelled to give up the precious map? In the October issue of GHOST STORIES, *this story moves to an astounding, smashing end. Don't miss the weird battle between a ghost and a living man in the last instalment! On the news stands August 23rd.*

Automatic Writing

An Editorial by ROBERT NAPIER

ASSUMING that the departed actually seek to communicate with those still on earth, it is obvious that they are somewhat at a loss to find means of doing so. Even when they are able to materialize as apparitions, they lack the power of speech. Stories are told, of course, of ghosts who talk things over in audible language, but it takes a pretty credulous person to accept such ghosts one hundred per cent.

If the method of communication is to be physical, we who are in the flesh must initiate it—must provide a receiving instrument, so to speak, for the subtle vibrations of the spirit. The tipping table and the ouija board are well-known devices. And one of the simplest, most logical, is the use of pencil and paper in automatic writing.

The "sensitive" places himself at a desk, or perhaps rests a writing board upon his knees. He holds a pencil, not too firmly, and lets the tip touch the paper naturally, as he would if he were about to compose a letter. Then he allows his muscles to go lax, and opens his mind to any psychic control that may be ready to take possession. That is all.

In the event of success, the sensitive's arm seems to be seized upon by an unseen force. He writes, without his own objective will having anything to do with it. The first scribblings are usually incoherent. The pencil may start by tracing wild flourishes and drawings. But it settles down to the recording of messages, which often have perfect clarity and bear directly upon the problems of the person addressed.

Presumedly, a spirit is taking advantage of the human mechanism that has been placed at its disposal. This is not half so difficult to believe as are some of

the other phenomena connected with the occult—ectoplasm, for instance, or spirit photography. There are cases on record of long messages having been written automatically—not in the caligraphy of the sensitive, but in that of the "control." In view of the fact that even an expert forger would find it impossible to reproduce another's handwriting at high speed, the evidence is quite convincing.

Do not overlook the point, however, that the subjective mind is capable of performing great wonders. The sensitive may be taking dictation from a ghost; but it is also arguable that he is in a state of trance and is dramatizing his inner knowledge of the departed being, with whom he is at that moment supposed to be *en rapport*.

"I HAD been reading about will power, and that if one concentrated on a thing one could compel someone else to do it. I was watching a friend clean his gun outside the back door of his home. A sudden adventurous urge made me try such vaunted power.

"I kept saying to him, mentally: 'You are awfully thirsty. You want a drink of water.'

"Suddenly, to my terror, I must own, he dropped his gun without a word or a look around, walked directly into the kitchen and got himself a drink of water. My 'power' really frightened me. Then I thought it might be accidental, so I tried it again. I kept saying mentally that he was very thirsty and wanted another drink of water.

"After but a few minutes, he again laid down his gun and, with an impatient movement, went into the house and got another drink. Returning, he seemed to see me for the first time, and said: 'Wonder what in the world makes me so thirsty all of a sudden. I haven't been eating fish.'

"I am quite convinced that my concentration caused him to imagine his thirst, and that he received my telepathic message to get a drink. I was, however, very frightened to find it 'worked,' and have never dared another such experiment, fearful of doing harm."

N. K.

New York City.

"Some years ago I spent a few weeks in the city of Glasgow, Montana. Just outside the city limits is a small cottage where I worked a few days each week. The people were very kind to me, and placed a room at my disposal. One night I felt an asthmatic attack coming on, so I decided to remain over night.

"After I retired, I happened to glance at the wall by the bed and there was a large black spot like a huge ink splotch on the wall. It was about a yard in diameter. I could not imagine what caused that big black spot, as the walls had been newly papered. I was awake all night because I was ill, and the spot remained on the wall all the time. About five o'clock in the morning, feeling much better, I fell asleep. When I awoke later, I noticed that the spot had disappeared.

"I got up and dressed myself and went home. That afternoon I returned, and the lady of the house told me that an old acquaintance of hers had stopped in to see her, and during his conversation had mentioned that the room I slept in was haunted. He told her that once in a while a large black shadow appeared on the wall.

"I was sorry that I had not been there, for I certainly would have liked to find out all about it."

B. W.

St. Paul, Minn.

"A few years ago our German police dog, Pal, was hit by a street car. About a week later, I was coming home from work on a Saturday afternoon and I heard claws scratching on the sidewalk in back of me, the way a dog walks. Thinking there was

a dog there, I turned and looked back, but could not see anything. When I got in the house, I learned that Pal was dead. Was it Pal's spirit? If a dog has a spirit! I hope so, because some of them, especially Pal, are nearly human." E. F.

Oakmont, Pa.

F. E. Y.:

"In reading through *The Meeting Place* in the June number of GHOST STORIES, I read your article offering to give the necessary information as to how to hold a spiritualistic séance. Am I making too great a request if I ask you to send me the information also?

"I am intensely interested in the subject, and if possible I would like to develop what psychic power I have. We have ever so many so-called spiritualists in this city, and so many frauds, that I do not care to attend their meetings. On several occasions I have attended séances, but have been struck by the lack of reverence. To me the thought of being able to communicate with our departed loved ones is such a wonderful privilege that I came away from those meetings in a very doubtful frame of mind, and I would like to meet people who are more serious-minded and whose minds run in higher channels.

"Your article was full of good advice and I sincerely hope A. G. profits by it. Is it possible to develop one's self alone? If so, please inform me how to go about it. I have been interested in the subject of spiritualism for some time and have had communications on several occasions uninvited, and if I have the ability within me I would be very happy to develop it."

Mrs. H. H. M. N.

Ventnor City, N. J.

"I believe in the hereafter and I also believe that spirits come back. I can sit down and my hand will write messages on a paper —and I don't move my hand at all; some other force must do it. I guess I am mediumistic, but I never have studied anything about occultism."

A. S.

Chicago, Illinois.

"One day, about noon, five years ago, I went to apply for some work, a short distance beyond the cemetery where my father and mother and uncles are buried. I was unsuccessful and was greatly depressed.

"On the way back something seemed to draw me into the cemetery. Going to my father's grave, I knelt down and burst into tears. Then I was surprised to hear a distinct tapping sound, but could see no gravediggers or anyone else in sight. Next, I became aware of a presence at my left side, which seemed to whisper, 'You must keep up for the sake of your little boy.'

"I felt much better and knew that this was my father trying to console me."

M. J. H.

Cheshire, England.

"I often suffer with attacks of asthma, particularly in the summer. One summer night I woke up with a severe attack and when I had ceased coughing I noticed a dead silence in my room. My attention was somehow drawn to the door and there I saw something that looked like a person all dressed in green. I was greatly surprised and called out, 'Who is that?'

"The vision disappeared and I have never been able to find out who or what it was."

G. P.

Bangor, Michigan.

"I was spending the night at a neighbor's house and helping her with her children. About eleven o'clock I was going up the stairs when I heard hurried footsteps, as though someone was coming up after me. I stopped and looked around but could see no one in sight. I then proceeded to go on up the stairs.

"When I reached the landing, I was surprised to see a man. There seemed to be a halo of light around his head and he appeared to be floating on air. I was terribly frightened and told my friend about it. She said that her mother had seen the same vision. This all happened several years ago, and the house now stands empty, with its windows all broken and almost in ruins."

L. E. P.

Mount Dora, Florida.

SKELETONS *in the* Closets *of* Famous Families

The true story of Cornelius, the comedy ghost of Dublin, whose hauntings led to a lawsuit

By GORDON HILLMAN

HOW a ghost got itself into a lawsuit, was rude to an English baronet and refused to have its picture in the papers is contained in the true story of Cornelius, one of the most amusing specters in history.

In all the weird, ghastly annals of the supernatural in Great Britain, there are only three apparitions that can be said to be humorous. The most ancient of them is the much debated "Drummer of Tedworth," who made life miserable for Mr. Mompesson early in the Eighteenth Century.

Now, Mr. Mompesson was a small town magnate and a gentleman of dignity, and when unseen hands began rattling his beds, thumping on the stairs, and even visiting physical indignities on Mr. Mompesson's family, he acted with extraordinary dispatch.

The gentleman, in fact, went so far as to have an astounded tinker arrested and lodged in jail as the perpetrator of all these psychic crimes. No sooner was the tinker safe in the village lock-up, two miles away, than the disturbances in Mr. Mompesson's house redoubled, and a phantom roll of drums began to echo through the rooms.

Mr. Mompesson promptly reached a high peak of irritation and charged the tinker with a variety of crimes that included everything but arson. A highly amused jury tried the tinker, and the prosecutor ingeniously attempted to prove that the tinker, whistling in his jail cell two miles away, was responsible for throwing Mr. Mompesson out of bed. The tinker, who seemed to be highly pleased with the proceedings, was promptly acquitted, and Mr. Mompesson called in the village clerics to lay the merry specter that played such pranks.

The specter seems to have been rather rude to the reverend gentlemen, and the end of the whole matter was that Mr. Mompesson packed up his goods and moved away. Since then, investigators have shown a decided tendency to blame the Tedworth Drummer upon one of Mr. Mompesson's small daughters, who must have been a very mischievous little girl.

But if Mr. Mompesson's specter has been explained more or less satisfactorily, that of Cornelius never has. Cornelius, late in the

Nineteenth and early in the Twentieth Century, was a familiar of Dublin's famous "Haunted Street." Here stands the house where two small children were mysteriously murdered, after phantom figures had flitted through the halls; here stand row on row of mansions where ghastly happenings have occurred.

ALMOST at the end of the Nineteenth Century, a Mr. Waldron, who lived in one of these houses, filed a lawsuit in the Dublin courts against his neighbor, a Mr. Kiernan. He said that Mr. Kiernan had a nasty habit of breaking all the windows in the house, knocking on the walls and committing similar depredations.

Mr. Kiernan promptly countered by producing twenty respectable witnesses, householders on the street, who testified that Mr. Waldron's mansion was haunted, and had been for the last fifty years.

The judge, whose legal mind rather shied at specters, questioned the constable on the beat, and this brass-buttoned gentleman affirmed under oath that the most peculiar doings took place nightly along the street. What caused them he didn't know, and he didn't think it was the duty of the Dublin police force to inquire too closely.

The justice then divested himself of his robes, and accompanied the constable, Mr. Kiernan and Mr. Waldron to the home of the last named for the evening. To further the investigation, they sat silently in the front parlor and extinguished all the lights.

About eleven o'clock, they heard a rattling at one of Mr. Waldron's windows, and as they looked, a diamond-shaped pane sagged inward, followed by a slim hand of a rough, red color. The constable brought down his truncheon on the hand, and had the unhappy experience of striking nothing but thin air. The window went in with a crash, and Mr. Kiernan, who was peering out another aperture, was unable to see that either a human body or even an arm had been attached to the hand.

The next day, Mr. Kiernan was acquitted while Mr. Waldron paid the costs of the case, and shortly afterward broke his lease, on the grounds that he was sharing his house with "supernatural tenants." The records of this peculiar lawsuit are still in existence.

Incidentally, this seems to have been the first recorded appearance of Cornelius. His second began immediately after the Arbuthnot family moved into the house next door. Now, the Arbuthnots were related, on the distaff side at least, to half the famous families of England; and Mr. Arbuthnot was a government official.

The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Arbuthnot, their small son, and the inevitable pair of maid servants.

One of these women came hurriedly to Mr. Arbuthnot on the second day of their residence, and cried hysterically that there was "something" in the kitchen.

There was nothing in the kitchen proper, but a most fiendish racket was coming from the coal cellar which opened off it. Mrs. Arbuthnot, being an English lady and the cousin of an earl, promptly dived into that sooty aperture, and found nothing save a silent collection of coals from Newcastle.

As she came out, however, some unseen thing brushed sharply against her, and she cried out, "What's that?"

"Corney," answered a husky voice from the coal cellar.

"What are you doing here?" said the amazed Mrs. Arbuthnot, and Cornelius replied sulkily, "Lived here a long time."

While Mrs. Arbuthnot turned her head to see if by any chance there could be some other living person in the kitchen, the maid cried out with fright. A fish, that had been on the table, was gone, she said, and she began to weep violently.

Mrs. Arbuthnot suspected the maid servant of making away with the fish herself, and even of impersonating a specter, when an indignant voice from the coal cellar snapped, "There, you blubbering fool!" and the fish flashed from nowhere on to the floor.

THAT was merely the beginning of the astounding adventures of Cornelius. He delighted in badgering the servants, and when Mr. Arbuthnot came home, the latter had the pleasure of crawling through an empty coal hole, while an invisible something chuckled softly at him.

A little inquiry in the neighborhood revealed the fact that Cornelius, or at any rate his voice, had scared the former tenants away, and that he had materialized to a servant girl, who promptly died of fright. This latter statement was probably a bit of fanciful embroidery on the facts, as Cornelius' only other materialization was to Master Arbuthnot, who said that "he was a tall naked man with a curl on his forehead, and a skin like a clothes horse."

Now Master Arbuthnot may have been, and probably was an imaginative young-

ster, so all the actual semi-fleshly appearances of Cornelius can be discounted. His voice, his pranks, and his pungent remarks can not.

He had an unpleasant habit of tampering with the doors, jamming keys in locks, and generally putting everything in the house out of order. Occasionally, he emerged from the coal hole, and could be heard upstairs conversing with Master Arbuthnot, and when there were guests he frequently came into the dining room, and pulled out chairs from under them.

He also would join in any conversation that interested him, and on one occasion Mrs. Arbuthnot's cousin, the earl, was considerably surprised to hear an indignant voice addressing him from an empty corner. After the earl got used to the novelty, he was highly delighted with Cornelius and used to go down to the coal hole for conversation with the merry specter.

He was responsible for inviting the local clergyman in to talk with Cornelius, and Cornelius promptly retired into silence and refused to speak. Afterward, according to the earl, he expressed a great dislike of all religious gentlemen, but said that "the vicar was a very good man."

No sooner had the earl gone than Mrs. Arbuthnot found that a dozen of her silver spoons were missing. She promptly accused Cornelius, who told her that she would find them under the servant's mattress. She did, and the maid was promptly sent packing.

At about this time, Cornelius' fame had begun to spread abroad, and Mr. Arbuthnot's uncle, who was Sir Arthur and a baronet to boot, arrived filled with indignation that his niece should be so foolish as to credit the existence of the supernatural. Sir Arthur was a famous ghost layer, and took great pride in exposing psychic matters of all sorts. He said that Cornelius was merely a ventriloquist amusing himself, or herself, and that probably the maid was to blame. Mrs. Arbuthnot pointed out that Cornelius had caused several servants to leave promptly and that none of the original ones remained in the house, but Sir Arthur was sure.

He was so sure, that, armed with a poker, he descended to the coal cellar and summoned Cornelius forth. Cornelius became sulky and refused to speak, whereat the baronet beat upon the cellar door with the poker, and termed the specter a flat fraud.

He laid down the poker, and was lecturing the Arbuthnots, on superstition, when the poker suddenly snapped in two with a metallic twang, and Cornelius could be heard chuckling in his sooty retreat.

Sir Arthur could not bend the poker, let alone break it, and while he was trying, Cornelius addressed him as "Four Eyes" (Sir Arthur wore glasses), and expressed himself most disagreeably on the subject of skeptical baronets.

Sir Arthur promptly went to bed in a huff, and locked his door securely behind him. In the morning, he complained bitterly that someone had pulled all the clothes off him in the night, and Cornelius, chortling in the coal cellar, was clearly heard to say, "I slept on Master Arthur's feet last night."

The angry baronet left at once, and wrote a most indignant letter to the Dublin papers, which brought a skeptical reporter and an equally skeptical cameraman to the scene.

Cornelius, chuckling hugely, consented to be interviewed, and said he "had been a bad man," but flatly refused to appear for his photograph. The reporter, suspecting ventriloquism, had the cameraman see to it that all the Arbuthnots and their servants were in a far part of the house, but Cornelius spoke on. The reporter scratched his head, and later wrote an article which is still in the files. Remembering Sir Arthur's experience, he was very respectful to Cornelius.

ONE night, Cornelius announced to Mrs. Arbuthnot that he was "going to have company, and if you want any water from the soft water tank, you'd better take it now."

All night long, the sound of many voices came from the kitchen, and in the morning, the water in the tank was black as ink. Some bread and butter left in the pantry also bore the marks of black fingers.

After this, Mrs. Arbuthnot was not greatly surprised when Cornelius told her he was "going out to call on a lady," and not to be alarmed "if I make some noise coming in."

But Cornelius got too noisy and played too many tricks to be a comfortable companion. The Arbuthnots resolved to sell their house at a bargain, but when the real estate dealers brought their clients, Cornelius would suddenly converse with them or trip them up, and both dealers and clients went away in a hurry.

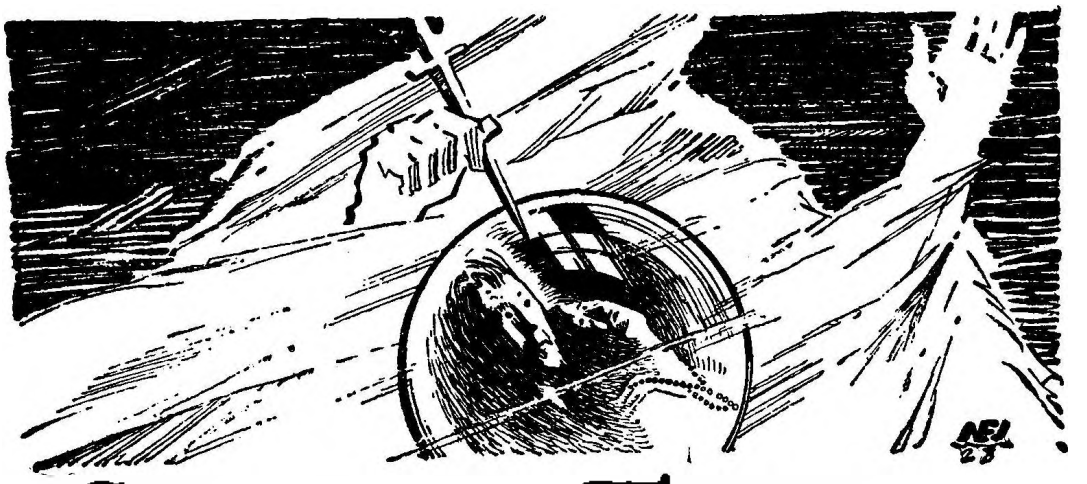
Mrs. Arbuthnot attempted to reason with him, and Cornelius said sulkily that he "didn't like the people," but that everything was going to be all right now. "I see a lady

in black coming up the street and she will buy the house," he remarked.

Mrs. Arbuthnot looked out the window, and a few moments afterward a lady in black did turn the street corner, and did buy the house. Cornelius was too much for her, and she moved out after two months. The house is still vacant, and anyone wishing the company of a lively ghost may inquire concerning it through the Dublin real estate men.

THERE once *was* a man who liked ghosts, and he was Sir Charles L. M. Monk, of Belsay Castle in Northumberland. He had a private and personal ghost and her name was "Silky." Silky was a lady—not an old crone, but a young and lively Miss—and she frightened the villagers nearly to death by suddenly materializing and mounting on horseback behind them as they rode across the lonely moor. Then, suddenly, there would be a rustle of silk and she would be gone.

Silky liked horses, and she frequently patronized the mail coach, to the great horror of all concerned. Legends of her are still told in the village of Black Heddon, though she has appeared only once or twice since motor cars came into style. Belsay Castle still boasts "Silky's Seat," a stone bench so named by Sir Charles, because at times she could be seen there. Sir Charles, a man of humor, was monstrously proud of her, and on one occasion a visiting Bishop from London was startled nearly out of his senses when Sir Charles' gig, in which he was seated, started off by itself and proceeded around the drive with nothing more than the noise of a faint rustle of silk from the driver's seat. The Bishop left a quite agonized account of the affair in a letter.



SPIRIT TALES

Timely Topics of Current Interest

By COUNT CAGLIOSTRO

DOCTOR WALTER FRANKLIN PRINCE, the eminent authority on psychic investigation, has recently exploded a bombshell in the scientific world. There are those who applaud the good Doctor enthusiastically; others have beheld his explosion and have said "Pish!"—and "Tosh!" Judging only by the recorded evidence of Doctor Prince and his opponents, I am inclined to believe that Doctor Prince is the more trustworthy witness. The facts are these:

For years we have heard of the wonders of European mediums. Here in America we have seen no great evidence of mediumistic wonders; particularly have we been deficient in what are called physical phenomena. Most of our materializing mediums have turned out to be the most blatant fakers as soon as someone had the courage and common sense to turn on a light. Our experience here—and I speak as one who has helped convict more than one of these gentry—has confirmed what Doctor Dingwall of the British Society told me long ago: that ninety-nine per cent of physical phenomena would eventually prove to be fake, and the remaining one per cent the subject of the gravest suspicion!

Such sentiments, when expressed to enthusiastic travelers who have just returned from abroad, arouse either indignation or scornful amusement. Europe, we are told, is full of mediums, powerful as dynamos! Did we suppose that Von Schrenk-Notzing was deceived, or did we think him a liar? Did we never hear of Rudi Schneider?

Well, certainly the readers of this department have heard of Rudi Schneider, as his miracles have been chronicled here. He has been reported to be the most powerful medium living today, a boy about whose unconscious form strange forces move and work weird wonders.

Last summer there appeared a pair of philanthropists from Ohio, American business men, who felt that it might be well if the famous and reputable Doctor Prince were to go abroad and look upon the signs and wonders for himself. They provided a part of the money, and the rest was put up by the Boston Society for Psychic Research, of which Doctor Prince is the research officer.

Doctor Prince went.

In Stuttgart, Germany, he had a long series of séances with Rudi Schneider. Later, he went to Graz, where he sat with Frau Maria Silbert. Eventually, he got to Warsaw, where he experimented with John Guzik, famous for what he did in the psychic laboratories of the Institut Metapsychique, in Paris. All that Doctor Prince saw and did, can now be read in a fascinating bulletin entitled *Experiments with Physical Mediums in Europe,* published by

the Boston Society. It is a long and serious account—but what it comes down to, is that Doctor Prince saw nothing at all! Trained investigator that he is, he presents his observations so clearly that even the most obstinate enthusiast, who wants to believe in signs and wonders, must concede at least the patent opportunities for fraud.

Here a Yankee went to Europe, and, unless I am very badly mistaken, he has made a laughing-stock of many of the big-wigs in psychic investigation. His bulletin is of immense consequence.

WHY are ghosts most prevalent at Christmas time? Marley rattled his chains at Scrooge on Christmas Eve, and he was merely following the fashion of hosts of other spectral apparitions who stalk down the corridors of ghost stories. The Christmas ghost is a tradition: but why? The London *Times* not long ago speculated on this subject and made an interesting report.

It was pointed out that the ghost story is by no means a thing of the past, but that on the contrary the vogue of ghost stories in literature and on the stage is probably greater than it has ever been. The season's bookshelves have been laden with spectral anthologies and original stories. The giving of "ghost parties" to which every guest must come with the most thrilling ghost story he or she can discover or create is said to be one of the popular delights of the moment with the young people.

Perhaps all this betokens something more than a superficial craze. To a certain extent the modern ghost story is itself a scientific exploration. It may even purport to be true—indeed, it generally does. It may also be taken as a testimony to the entertainment value of fear. In the comparative comfort and security of modern life, we have lost much of the pleasure our forefathers took in the purgation of the soul. The ghost in *Hamlet* does not affect us in the same way that it affected the people of the Seventeenth Century. "You are a scholar; speak to it, Horatio!" To us, the idea that the ghost of "the majesty of buried Denmark" must be so much more august than its original that it should by rights have been addressed in Latin, appears only an amusing freak of fancy.

For some reason or other we seldom talk nowadays of the "sublime," in which fear was so essential an element—though our guide-books do now and then refer to the "awe-inspiring" quality of the scenery at this or that mountain resort. Yet in the modern desire for that faint echo of the tragic appeal which is called a "thrill," still lives the old sense of pleasure in fear.

It remains something of a puzzle that this idea of pleasurable fright should have its special association with the Christmas feast. Even so modern a teller of ghost stories as Doctor Montague James tells us that his own notable contributions to ghost literature were most of them written expressly to be read to friends before a Christmas fire. On the face of it, the whole message of Christmas would seem to be alien to any thought of horror. The clanking of chains, the rattling of bones and all the other paraphernalia of the grislier type of Christmas ghost story: what have these things to do with peace and good-will, or, save as an uneasy dream, with the substantial revelries which are supposed to carry us through the "twelve days" on a wave of cheery optimism? Even Dickens found himself unable to allow Marley's ghost to put too sinister a complexion upon his fable.

IT might be that the very fact of Christmas being so largely a children's festival, which should have made ghost stories less admissible then than at any other time, has been in a measure their cause. The malicious sport of terrorizing children with tales of "gobble'uns what gits yer" and "long-leggity beasties and things that go bump in the night" was, until recently, all too notoriously fostered. The temptation has been ever present, for nowhere is the craving to "snatch a fearful joy" more manifest than in children. Happily the practice is tempered now, and ghost stories told to children are rarely those of the kind upon which little Mamilius was brought up.

On the whole, moreover, it may be that the only real connection which ghost stories have with Christmas is that Christmas is the time for all stories. Whether it be in "guiser" or ghost, ballad or game, the mere fact of men and women having been, from time immemorial, left to their own devices round the Christmas hearth, until the arrival of "open weather," has bequeathed to us an imaginative tradition not lightly to be forfeited.

Thus spake the London *Times*.

IN Italy, they still believe in witchcraft, as may be seen from the following incident reported to the press.

It appears that in Genoa a young woman

lost her hand-bag in a motor-bus, where it was found later by another passenger, who handed it over to the driver, who, in turn, took it to the offices of the Company. Here it was opened by an official and inside it, among a variety of objects of no importance, there was found a small cardboard box containing a bleeding heart pierced by a number of pins.

The horrified employe, scenting a crime, hastily conveyed the hand-bag to the nearest police station. An address in the bag enabled the police to identify the owner, and she was promptly invited to explain why she traveled about with bleeding hearts stuck with pins. For a long time the girl refused to give any information, but at last she confessed that having been abandoned by her lover, she had consulted a witch, who told her to get the heart of a lamb freshly killed, pierce it with pins, and bury it in a corner of the cemetery at Staglieno, together with the unfaithful lover's photograph: this would infallibly ensure his return. The girl was on her way to perform this rite when she lost her hand-bag, which was now being returned to her with much more publicity than she cared for.

Not all witchcraft stories are so harmless, or so free from tragedy. Only a few days ago, in a little village near Prato, not far from Florence, a poor old woman of over sixty was shot within a few yards of her home, because the death of a neighbor, a young girl who had just died of some wasting disease, was laid at her door. The victim was unpopular, being of a back-biting disposition, and public opinion branded her as a witch and attributed everything that went wrong in the village to her dealings in the Black Art. She was murdered by the brother of the girl who had died.

The foregoing incident was reported in the *Observer*, and a correspondent described further interesting Italian cases of the belief in the existence of witches. In one instance a page boy in a small hotel was the fourth son of elderly parents. The other children had all died in infancy, and Galliano had been preserved, according to his parents' testimony, by being slung in his cradle high up under the roof and only lowered at feeding-time. In this way the witches who had "bitten" the three preceding children could not reach him, and their wickedness was frustrated. Witches apparently cannot fly in that part of Italy.

THERE is great competition amongst the British Sunday papers for articles dealing with psychic matters. The Sunday *Express* is publishing a series of—more or less—true ghost stories. In the same paper Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is editing a column dealing with spiritualism. The Moseley-Munnings "confession" is appearing in *The People*, and a series of articles under the name of Mr. Price has commenced in the Sunday *Chronicle*. These articles have been prepared principally from material which has appeared in the journal of the American Society for Psychical Research. British newspaper readers really are interested in psychical research.

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GHOST STORIES has no use for charlatans. It disapproves of fortune telling of all kinds. But it believes that the serious pursuit of truth in this field deserves to be encouraged. It, therefore, invites its readers to form psychic circles for research work and to submit reports at the end of six months, to be judged on the basis of their scientific importance.

Amateur investigators should equip themselves by reading books by well-known authorities. The works of Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, Doctor Hereward Carrington, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Camille Flammarion are suggested, but there are many others.

CONDITIONS

Circles wishing to submit their reports to GHOST STORIES must appoint a secretary. The first act of the secretary should be to fill out the coupon at the bottom of the following page and send it in to the editor of GHOST STORIES. It is important that the magazine be informed of the founding of new circles.

The secretary must keep accurate written minutes of results obtained at all meetings. The minutes should cover a period of six months and be divided into six sections, one for each month.

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Reports will be purchased on the basis of the most remarkable results obtained. Should no circle succeed in demonstrating the reality of ghosts, we will, nevertheless, buy the three best reports. The one which receives the highest rating will be published in GHOST STORIES. We reserve judgment as to whether we shall publish the other two reports purchased.

The following board will pass upon the reports submitted:

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DOCTOR HEREWARD CARRINGTON, eminent student of psychic phenomena.

W. ADOLPHE ROBERTS, Editor of GHOST STORIES.

This offer expires at midnight, February 28th, 1929. Results will be announced as early as possible thereafter.

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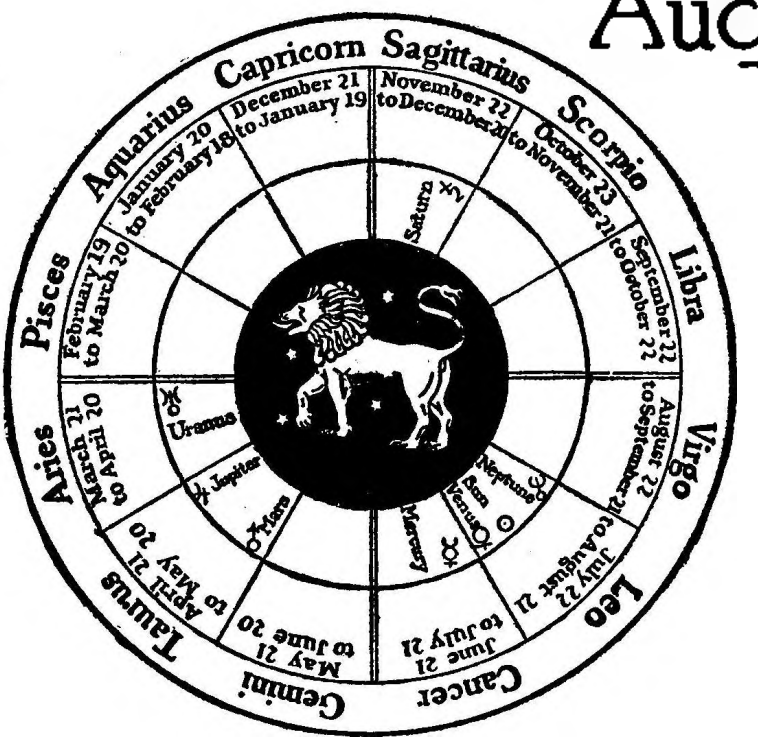
Secretary

Were You Born in August?

By STELLA KING



Let the Stars Indicate Your Fate

IF YOU were born between July 22 and August 22, you belong to the Leo family and are under the special protection of the Sun. You are of the nature of fire and are endowed with great enthusiasm and with the characteristics that make good organizers and rulers.

Leo, the lion, is the acknowledged lord of the animal kingdom, and you should be the ruler of your little circle in the community. Like the Sun, you are meant to be a center from which radiates kindness and helpful thoughts. Other things being equal, you would make an excellent president of any organization with which you are associated, for you have a talent for bringing out the best in other people; because each one of us is instinctively groping for something that will lead to expansion and development, you naturally attract others to you. The danger in this is, that you might become too dominating or too desirous of being the center of attraction. You must therefore keep your vanity in its proper place.

The powerful rays of the midsummer sun gave you a warmth of heart and a faith in the ultimate rightness of everything that no amount of disappointment can ever quite destroy, and in the ruby which you should wear as a talisman you will find the fires of courage, faith, hope and charity with which you may cheer those who do not possess your sunny disposition and optimistic temperament.

The color that vibrates in sympathy with you is orange, and you should have touches of this stimulating color about your rooms or your person. The orange vibrations arouse aspiration and ambition.

Now that August, 1928, has come around, it seems as though a brief mention should be made of the predictions relating to this particular time—with the fervent hope that the events foreshadowed may not come to pass.

Occult teaching concerning the cyclic periods of the world leads us to believe that our solar system passes through each of the signs of the Zodiac once in 2160 years, and that a new age or dispensation dawns with the entrance into a new sign. For the past

2000 years, our solar system has been passing through the sign of Pisces, the fish, and will continue in that sign for another 160 years, when we shall really enter upon the Aquarian or New Age.

The period we are now in may be called the period of transition. It already has brought the war of 1914, with all the changes that have followed. If the prophecies are to be believed, we stand now on the verge of another great war which may begin during the month of August. But, even should this prove to be so, we have not yet come to the end of the present cosmic cycle and, therefore, no devastating world cataclysm is to be expected, though great changes may occur.

THE measurements of the great pyramid of Gizeh, the predictions in the Bible, and other prophecies all seem to agree that 1928 is a critical year in the world's history and that a war, with its consequent upheavals, may be expected. August 1928 to 1932 is said to be the period of trial and tribulation and the following four years the period of adjustment. In 1939, a new era will dawn.

It is impossible to go into this matter more fully in a short article, but the same results have been obtained from a study of astronomical phenomena, which also occur in cycles. Predictions are based largely upon eclipses. Solar and lunar eclipses take place in the same order every 648 years, and the student of world history will doubtless find interest in tracing events in reference to these periods. In the same way, solar eclipses recur every nineteen years, and if they fall upon a sensitive spot in the horoscope, some important event or change will occur in the life of the individual during the year following the eclipse.

The planet Uranus is now in the eighth degree of Aries, near Algenib the fixed star in the wing of Pegasus, the Flying Horse. This is a sign of the tremendous enthusiasm that has been shown in Aviation. Individuals most likely to feel this vibration are those born during the last two days of March, June, October or December. Some of them may find themselves faced with domestic changes which perhaps they would rather have avoided; others will have to take care of their health and should avoid both risk and excitement; others again will be obliged to make changes which will be accompanied with considerable difficulty. And yet—when it is all over—they will probably realize that they have reached a higher development through those same difficulties. In the meantime, however, they should build up their nervous force and cultivate both prudence and self-control.

To those born about the end of July or November, this vibration promises favorable changes with unexpected good fortune and, in some cases, gain through speculation and unusual friendships.

If your birthday comes about the 29th of January or May, you are receiving helpful vibrations from Uranus and may anticipate unexpected turns of fortune which will be to your advantage, but the changes are not likely to be quite so important as those that will come to the July and November people. You will all have to renounce one thing before Uranus will let you have the other: he won't ever let you keep both the old and the new.

Jupiter is now helping the Taureans, Virginians and Capricornians and is especially interested in those born about the end of April, August or December. If your birthday comes at any of these times, take steps now to improve your financial status and enjoy to the full the feeling of well-being that Jupiter brings. He is the great protector.

Mars also is concerning himself with the Taureans and is stirring them into unusual activity. This is good, so long as they do not go to extremes. Those born about May 16 should be especially careful during the last day or two of July and the first of August, as the martial rays will come to them at that time tinged with the violent and destructive vibrations of Medusa's Head, most baleful of all the fixed stars. This also applies to Scorpions born about November 17.

The Leos whose birthday comes about August 21 are still under the influence of Neptune. They may expect events to happen in roundabout ways, as Neptune often expresses himself through other people or through circumstances over which the individual has little control. They should act with great discretion in any matter which comes up about August 5, 6 or 7, as Mars at that time will send Neptune an exciting vibration which is likely to bring into prominence the less desirable qualities of the latter planet. Neptune is associated with sensation, and an adverse ray from Mars and Neptune sometimes leads to great self-indulgence. Most of the Leos, however, are now enjoying harmonious and helpful vi-

brations from the Sun, Venus and Mercury, and this should be a pleasant and profitable period for them.

The remaining planet, Saturn, is still in Sagittarius, in the same position that he occupied last December. Those born on or about the fourth of December, June, March or September should protect themselves from cold and should cultivate young and pleasant society, so as to throw off the depressing vibrations of the great disciplinarian. This is not a propitious time for them to assume unnecessary responsibility, but should additional work be thrown upon them, it will not hurt them if they use their common sense and insist upon the proper amount of rest and exercise. They should try to maintain an equable frame of mind.

Prize Winners *for the* Month

The awards to readers for opinions of GHOST STORIES, issue of May, went to:

1st award of $10.00	2nd award of $5.00	3rd award of $3.00
Miss Pauline Sherman, Grand Rapids, Mich.	**Mr. B. C. Black Chautauqua, N. Y.**	**Miss Henrietta Lucile Scheerer Portland, Oregon.**

Someone will collect the awards for opinions on this issue. Why not YOU?

The Letter *that* Won First Prize

ALTHOUGH I am merely another of the countless multitude of readers and admirers of GHOST STORIES, I feel that I simply *must* voice my pent-up opinions of your wonderful magazine.

As a lover of good stories of horror and the supernatural, I always turn to GHOST STORIES for a sort-of "dessert," after reading from the works of Poe or De Maupassant.

The May issue of GHOST STORIES was certainly a most marvelous collection of gripping and fascinating stories of that undying Gothic type.

To me, *The Mirror that Swallowed Shadows* was not only the most thrillingly-gripping of the short stories, but the most beautiful as well. When I read it, the realization came to me that Mr. Mearson is capable of being a poet, as well as a modern Poe. I could not possibly help but sincerely admire his exquisite description of the music of Chopin, as, "notes like pearls dropped singly into a platter of gold."

The Thing in the Dark Pool can be classified as a story of horror, yet of the utmost fascination. It reminded me of Poe's tales —weird, horrible, fascinating, and with a surprising solution that in reality is a mystifying addition.

A Dream that Lasted a Century was another short story that impressed, thrilled and awed me at the same time. Its ghoulish awfulness was further embellished by my sister's playing of Sibelius' *Valse Triste*. The combined effect was terrific.

When the Red Gods Call is truly a masterpiece and promises to be one of GHOST STORIES' outstanding serials. It is a masterly combination of the horror and ingenuity of Poe, and the history and romance of Cooper.

The Siren of the Pit is an extremely clever story, or what seems to be a somewhat modernized version of the legend of the Lorelei of the Rhine and the sirens of Homer's *Odyssey*.

Superstitions that Will Live Forever was exceedingly interesting, delightful and very entertaining literature. It contained clever humor and a generous amount of fascinating history. I sincerely hope that other articles of this type will follow.

Skeletons in the Closets of Famous Families is one of the brilliant gems in GHOST STORIES' crown. Now, isn't this a splendid opportunity to catch up with your history?

The Haunted Hotel, to me, seemed just mediocre. It would have been a good story, had it been more mystifying.

I believe it would be splendid if GHOST STORIES would publish monthly reprints of famous classical stories of the supernatural. I remember one—Irving's story of the *Bold Dragoon*, from *Tales of a Traveler*—it was great! I hope that GHOST STORIES will continue to shine in the firmament of good literature.

PAULINE SHERMAN
Grand Rapids, Mich.

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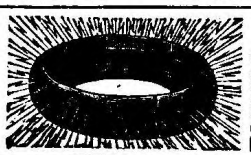

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